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THE

THEOLOGICAL,

PHILOSOPHICAL AND MISCELLANEOUS

WORKS

OF THE

REV. WILLIAM JONES, M.A. F.R.S.

IN TWELVE VOLUMES.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A SHORT ACCOUNT

OF HIS

LIFE AND WRITINGS.

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OF THE

FIFTH VOLUME.

SERMONS.

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* TO THE

RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,

GEORGE

LORD BISHOP OF NORWICH.

MY LORD,

WHEN I read the excellent Discourses you have given to the Public, I feel as if the world could not want any thing of the same kind from myself; and I consider your Lordship as one of the last persons to whom I ought to offer them. But, as they come abroad in consequence of your own *advice* to the Author, which, as you are now become my Diocesan, has the force of a *command*, they are sure of a favourable reception from yourself; and I am persuaded they will, on that account, be better received by the Public.

* This Dedication was prefixed to the two Volumes of Sermons published in the lifetime of the Bishop.

In my late Lectures on the *Figurative Language of the Holy Scriptures*, I have carried the apostolical mode of interpreting them as far as I thought it needful; and have laid down rules from the scripture itself, by the observation of which, good and learned men may carry it much farther. I have therefore omitted, for the present, the publication of many discourses of the expository kind, which I have by me, and have confined myself chiefly to such subjects as tend to make the Christian wiser and happier, and more useful in the conduct of his life. I have followed your Lordship's judgment in the choice of one moral subject with which these volumes are concluded *; and I wish young men of fortune would consider it for themselves, as earnestly as I have considered it for them.

Every age hath its favourite errors; to which fashion gives dignity and influence. When these come in my way, I never spare them: yet I endeavour to correct

* The Sermons above alluded to are the 13th and 14th in the 6th Volume.

correct them as mildly and prudently as I can. But when I say this, I am sensible there is an Author, whose happy manner and temper, on such occasions, few will be able to equal, or even to imitate.

The present time gives me an opportunity of congratulating the Church of England on the addition of such a Prelate to the already-excellent and learned bench of English Bishops: and it would be criminal in me, if I were not to add my own to the general voice of the Public, on this occasion.

That there may be in the diocese the same disposition, as there will be in your Lordship, to promote the peace, piety, and edification of all orders of people in it, is the wish, and shall be the prayer of,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's ever-obliged Friend,

And devoted humble Servant,

WILLIAM JONES.

NAYLAND,
MAY 30, 1790.

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SERMON I.

FRET NOT THYSELF. PSALM XXXVII. 1.

IT is of more importance to every man, that his mind should be at peace, than that his body should be in health. We use great caution for the preservation of our bodily ease; and are at great expences for the restoring of it when lost. But as a restless mind is a worse evil, and hath also an effect in impairing the faculties of the body, all proper preservatives are diligently to be sought for and applied.

We are sent hither, into a world, where sin produces a thousand disorders: we are therefore born to meet with such things as will disturb and vex us, more or less, according to our different principles and propensities.

We must see right invaded, innocence oppressed, wisdom disregarded, merit neglected, justice hated, truth misrepresented and opposed, hypocrisy, rapine and violence unpunished, and sometimes applauded.

At these things the wisest of mankind are apt to be agitated with unreasonable indignation: while the weak, ignorant, and impatient, are driven to despair, madness and suicide.

When persons of delicate habits, and tender irritable minds, are without principle; which is too often the case in this age of *uninformed sentiment*; the prospect is dreadful. For when such are disappointed, they become desperate; accusing Providence, when they ought to accuse themselves; and flying out of life, in a rage at those evils, which, perhaps, need not have been; or might have been cured; or, at least, rendered very supportable.

Our blessed Saviour, knowing how his disciples were exposed to all the trials common to other men, and to other uncommon ones brought upon them by their profession, gives them this necessary advice—*In your patience possess ye your souls.* Of which passage, the physiology is strict and true: for the impatient are not in possession of their souls: they are no more masters of themselves than persons divested of their reason.

reason. And the two cases are so much alike, that the fashion of the times hath confounded them; by making no distinction, in cases of suicide, between the wickedness of impatience, and the weakness of lunacy.

And what can we find within ourselves to give us patience? Human prudence may be allowed the wisdom of experience, to make us cautious; but it hath nothing positive, to give us strength: no gifts, no doctrines, no promise; all of which are necessary to us in our present state.

The pride of heathen philosophy affected an indifference to pain and pleasure; and having adopted the principle of a blind fatality in nature, fled to *insensibility*, as the grand remedy for all the evils of life.

Under the state of the gospel, zeal and piety bring Christian people into difficulties, by exposing them to the hatred of the world. To avoid which, we are under a temptation of betaking ourselves to the convenient policy of *offending nobody:* and, to put a face upon our pusillanimity, we call it *discretion*; the cheapest of all the virtues: because the reputation of it is obtained by doing nothing; at least, by doing no good, for fear of interrupting our own ease. The brightness of the rainbow is at-

tended by another circle, of an inferior light wherein the order of the colours is inverted. So is the bright circle of the virtues attended by another set, of a spurious kind, which mock the true; and this faint-hearted discretion is one of them. It may please us for a time, but it will deceive us at last.

The thing to be desired, therefore, is a true *religious* serenity of mind. We call it *patience*, in respect to the ways of men; and *faith*, or *resignation*, in respect to the ways of God.

This is to be attained

First, from reasonable consideration;

Secondly, from the rules of prudence;

Thirdly, from the practice of piety.

The text saith, when the context is added, *Fret not thyself because of the ungodly!* The troubles of good men arise chiefly from the ways of evil men; of which we have many examples from the life and ministry of Jesus Christ; whose enemies were the greatest of villains and hypocrites, from Herod the king down to Judas the traitor. When good men trouble one another, they do it by mistake: but a bad man cannot act as such, without molesting society, and injuring his neighbours. Vice, as a cause, will have its proper effects, as brutes, by invariable instinct, follow the ferocity

rocity or uncleanness of their natures. Idleness will rob and plunder and run in debt; avarice will cheat: error will persecute the truth which it hates; ambition, to raise itself, must reduce other men; malice must gratify itself with lying and defamation; and revenge must live, like a vulture, upon blood.

When we see these things, we are to consider, that the wicked who disturb the world are themselves in a very perilous situation; which is abundantly described in the psalm from whence the text is taken. It is observed of them,

First, that they are all weak and mortal like ourselves: that they shall soon be cut down like the grass and withered even as the green herb. We are all under one common sentence of death; and no man hath in this respect any pre-eminence above another. However great and powerful a sinner may be in his wickedness, he must be cut down and withered. When we lament our own mortality, we may lament his; and so long as we can lament his fate, we shall be more patient towards his failings.

But the condition of his life, while it last, is not such as it may appear to be from some partial circumstances: it is unhappy and en-

snaring, in its best estate. If we find a man's ill humour troublesome to us, we may be assured it is much more troublesome to himself. He who giveth light, must first be illuminated: he who troubleth others, must first be troubled himself. The sea is agitated by the wind, before the ship is tossed about and endangered by it; so the people who disturb mankind are *like the troubled sea*, which can never rest, but casteth up mire and dirt, and defiles its own waves with the foulness of its own bottom.

The temporary success of a wicked man is a snare to him. His prosperity, while it lasts, is not a blessing, as to good men, but a temptation and a curse. Therefore it is said, in the book of Proverbs, *the prosperity of fools shall destroy them* :* it shall beget a blind confidence and presumption, which shall lead them on from one ruinous step to another. It shall furnish them with all the means and instruments of corruption, and bring them into captivity to the worst of passions: in which miserable condition, they may be so absurd as to be proud of themselves: but certainly they are no objects of envy to us. They may despise our lot; but we have all the reason in the world to pity them; and

* Prov. i. 32.

and so long as we are under the influence of pity, we shall not be disturbed with anger.

We are farther to consider, that evil doers are not only mortal, but worse. The man who is executed is more miserable than he who dieth in the course of nature. Besides the evil of mortality, the evil of vengeance awaits a bad man; and while he is whetting the weapon of malice, a sword of judgment, which he doth not see, is hanging over him, ready to drop upon his head. The eye of God is upon his ways, though not in his thoughts; and when the measure of his sins is filled up, he shall be rooted out. While he is counselling for himself, or against better men, the Lord, who sees what he is upon, and that his *day is coming*, is represented as laughing his confidence to scorn: knowing, that instead of prevailing against the just, he is sharpening a sword which will be turned against himself, and go through his own heart. "I myself," saith the Psalmist, "have "seen the ungodly in great power, and flourish-"ing like a green bay-tree. I went by and lo "he was gone; I sought him but his place "could no where be found." His power is at an end; he can trouble us no longer; he is gone, as if he had never been.

Such is the real lot of evil men, under the

flattering appearances of their temporary successes: therefore, "grieve not thyself at him, "whose way doth prosper; against the man "who doeth after evil counsels—wicked doers "shall be rooted out; and they that patiently "abide the Lord, those shall inherit the land.".

From which words we learn, that our peace will be farther promoted by a consideration of the promises made to the godly: who have this assurance, that all things work together for good to them that love God: that the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous; not to secure them absolutely from trouble, but to exercise them therewith, and then to deliver them out of it. Some men seem to be sent into the world for the trial of others. They answer the end of winds and storms, which purge the atmosphere of its vapours; and, by agitating the roots of trees and plants, make them grow the faster. Of such we are to remember, that as the weather is under God's direction, so are they under the restraints of his power. He permits them to go to certain lengths for purposes known to himself: but they can go no farther.

Enemies answer so many purposes, that they are in some degree necessary to every good man. The army stationed in an enemies country is vigilant; which, at home, where there is no danger,

ger, would be dissolute. So, in private life, a man's enemies oblige him to live more prudently and virtuously; that no advantage may be given to those who will be glad to take it. His enemies may be farther necessary, for the punishment of his sins. *When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him**. Whence the inference is natural; that his life may be less peaceable, because his ways want to be corrected. The conscience of David, in his troubles, put this interpretation upon the curses of Shemei. Thus may ill men be of use to drive us back to our duty, as wild beasts drive man from the woods and the forests into the safety of civil society. And if God, when such things happen, will be pleased to accept of the railings and reproaches of an enemy towards the pardon of our sins; we should be thankful for them. There would be no absurdity (and, supposing them to come from the impenitent, no want of charity) in praying for more of them.

There are virtues of forbearance and fortitude, which cannot be called into action, but by the provocations of the injurious; and the more unjust they are, the less we ought to be offended: for here, we are to look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; and to consider,

* Prov. xvi. 7.

sider, how he endured the contradiction of sinners in his ministry, how, pride, malice, avarice, and absurdity, were for ever working against him, to pervert his sayings, confound his reasonings, and turn the hearts of the people away from him. This we should think of, when our reasonings, however right and true, are neglected by the pride of false science, or overborn by the importunity and impudence of error. If, when we have laboured to do wisely, we are reported to have done foolishly; or to have done wrong, when we have done right, it must occasion a struggle in the passions: but a little patience will keep things from growing worse, and a little time may set them all to rights. Thus did our Blessed Master commit himself to the righteous judgment of God: and we have a promise, that if we commit our way to him, he will "make our righteousness as clear as the light, and our just dealing as the noon-day." Truth shall dispel the clouds which envy raises. The Priests and Rulers of the Jews prevailed for a time against Jesus Christ; but their imaginations were vain; he was soon settled on the holy hill of Sion, and received the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. The lot of every pious man is after the same pattern. He may seem

seem to fall, but he shall not be cast away, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. The life of a Christian is a kind of paradox, in which apparent evil is real good. So the Apostle describes the state of himself and his fellow Christians, as of men who were living and dying at the same time, as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. We are impatient, 'till evil is removed; but if it is turned into good, that is better for us: and the time of retribution will come, when all things that offend shall be cast out; all the seeming errors of the present time shall be rectified.

This consideration will be sufficient, if every other should fail us. It was this which supported the martyrs of Jesus Christ under all the scorn and cruelty of their Jewish and Heathen enemies. They had the earnest of their hope from the case of the first martyr Stephen; to whose eyes that prospect of glory was presented, which is prepared for all those who suffer for the sake of truth and righteousness.

2dly. When we have laid up these considerations in our minds, we must also be careful to follow such *rules of prudence*, as the Scripture hath given, and experience hath justified.

Peace

Peace of mind is not a speculation, but a practical art; the result of proper information and prudent attention.

First then, it is necessary we should be possessed and penetrated by a true sense of our own unworthiness in the sight of God and man. When any person over-rates himself, he expects honours which are not due to him, and is disappointed and vexed if he does not receive them. The lunatic, who has made himself a king in his own imagination, raves if he is not treated as such by people in their senses. Lighter cases, but the same in kind, occur to us every day; and men make such mistakes about themselves, as bring them into great trouble: whereas an humble mind is not easily hurt. When we have abased ourselves, we cannot be thrown down: but he that has placed himself aloft in his own estimation, is exposed to many a downfall. Humanity will be tender to a vain man, and the religious will pity him; but the inconsiderate always take a delight in pulling him down.

The order and regularity of a *methodical life* hath great effect in keeping the mind recollected and undisturbed. When people live, as too many do, not by rule, but slothfully and by chance, their affairs are perplexed; and when

when they are out of temper with themselves, they are less able to bear with the perverseness of others. While every thing about them is wrong, their minds can never be right; but great inconveniences are avoided by œconomical attention, and the regularity of an industrious spirit; which is one of the greatest blessings in life.

Moderation and contentment are absolutely necessary to our peace; for when our ways and means are exceeded by our wants, we must either fall into distress, or be forced upon mean and base expedients; to the loss of our honour, and the wounding of our consciences. Ungoverned appetite is either sick or poor: often both at once; and poverty, which we have brought upon ourselves, is always vexatious. We never see people happy who outlive their fortunes; but generally fretful, restless and quarrelsome; or dejected and melancholy; and this may serve to shew us, what a large share of the evil we complain of, is of our own making.

Moderation, as it signifies temperance in meat and drink, hath a great effect upon the temper. It keeps the mind cool as well as the body; and the influence of the one upon the other is undisputed. The sick man is careful of

his diet, and lives sparingly in a fever, lest he should inflame his distemper. We are all sick of sin; and fretfulness is the hectic of the mind; which must be corrected by the same regimen as reduces a feverish heat in the body. Christianity gives us *knowledge* for the correcting of every error; but it bids us *add temperance.* Devils go not out without *fasting;* and it is as true, that evil passions cannot be kept under, but by habits of self-denial. He who can deny himself not only reduces his mind to a temperate state, but disarms the malice of his enemies; because he does that voluntarily, for his own good, which another would do maliciously to his hurt; he mortifies himself.

In the next place let us beware of being hurt by little offences and slight accidents. Great calamities work upon the rational and manly affections of the mind. Small affronts have nothing to work upon but our pride; a tender and irritable principle. We are so apt to be surprized by light occasions of vexation, that they often give us more trouble than heavy causes of affliction, against which we are better provided. We arm ourselves against lions and tygers, or keep out of their way; while we are often tormented with sleepless nights from rats and insignificant noises.

To

To cure this infirmity, the mind should accustom itself to great objects; it should present to itself the dreadful dangers of temptation; the future certain approaches of death; the just judgment of God; the torments of hell; the joys of heaven; and while it is thus acting like a man, it will not be fretted like a child, with little things.

It will also lessen our embarrassment, on many occasions, if we make it a rule to be silent before our enemies. If a man is under a mistake, or slow of apprehension, or poisoned with misinformation; we may do him and ourselves good by discoursing with him: but if we once discover that he has a bad, that is, a malicious design, we should make it a rule never to talk with him, we have no chance with such a person but by being silent. If we speak never so long, we shall do him no good; but only give him an opportunity of misreporting our words, and turning them against us. The Scribes and Pharisees, from the malice of their hearts, *urged* our Saviour *vehemently to speak of many things* *; laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him. Malice will work in other men now, as it did in

* Luke xi. 53.

in them: and as our Saviour himself was silent, when he could do no good by speaking; there are many occasions in life, when we shall very much lessen our danger and trouble by following the wisdom of his example.

It will also contribute greatly to our peace, if we view things on the bright side, and make the best of them, in our private meditations, and in our conversation. As all lead contains some silver in it, so hath all evil some good, which a skilful mind may extract. The sagacious bee, when it traverses the fields, turns not aside from a poisonous flower; but is possessed of a chemical art, which can draw honey from every plant: so saith the Apostle, supposing us to have the like faculty, *in every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God.*

3dly. Such are the considerations with which we are to fortify our minds, and the rules by which we are to direct our lives, for the preservation of our tranquillity. But I am now to observe, that all other rules and considerations will be ineffectual, without the *practice of piety;* that is, without the prayers and devotions of a Christian. When we would move men to consider and learn, we tell them that peace of mind is an art; but when we would move them to pray, we must remind them, that

that it is a gift. The composure of a devout mind is called *the peace of God, which passeth all understanding;* it must therefore come from God himself; and if we do not ask for it, we cannot have it. *O, pray for the peace of Jerusalem,* saith the Psalmist to the Church: so must we admonish every individual, "O, "pray for the peace of thine own heart, if thou "dost expect to find it." Our religion hath every wise doctrine, and every wholesome precept; but, throughout the whole, *Faith* acts as the sovereign *power,* and the universal *remedy;* without which there can be neither the comfort of Hope nor the patience of Charity. *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith:* and why doth the world overcome so many, but because they are without it? and, consequently without prayer, which is the speech of faith, and the evidence of our spiritual life? If we *live,* we shall *speak:* and that we may never be at a loss for proper expressions, the whole book of Psalms is provided for private as well as public use, and fitted for every occasion that can befall us.

The advantages of keeping up this communion with God, are too many to be enumerated, and too great to be described: but certainly nothing composes the mind under all its

trials like that great expedient of opening our grief to him who is able to help us, and hath promised never to leave us nor forsake us. Great, and instructive in the issue of it, is the example of the good king Hezekiah; who when he had received that letter of defiance and blasphemy from the king of Assyria, went into the Temple, *and spread it before the Lord* *; and by his prayer obtained a signal deliverance to himself and his people. We cannot even present ourselves before God, without this good effect; that we are thereby instantly detached from the world which troubles us. We dare not, we cannot, give way to the weaknesses of Nature, while his eye is upon us, to restrain us. It is related of one of our kings, whose devotion supported him under all the trials of persecution and martyrdom: that when he had received some inflicting intelligence, while he was upon his knees at the public prayers, he continued in the same posture till they were ended; and then he relapsed into the condition of a man, and retired to give vent to his sorrow.

If we could go into heaven, the world, with all its cares, would be left behind us: and although this cannot be, so long as we are in the body; yet we may at all times *lift up our hearts,*

* 2 Kings xix. 14.

hearts, and ascend thither with our thoughts and affections. Faith can fix an anchor there, which will keep us steady under all the changes and chances of this mortal life.

SERMON II.

SET YOUR AFFECTION ON THINGS ABOVE.
COLOSS. iii. 2.

IT can hardly be denied, that all men are desirous of happiness; though, at the same time, it must be confessed, some are so miserably mistaken in the pursuit, that it may be difficult to give any rational account of their proceedings. They either think that to be happiness, which is not so: or, if they are right as to the object, they have such prejudices concerning the means of obtaining it, as render all their endeavours ineffectual.

I shall make it my business to shew you in this discourse, that till we *set our affections on things above*, no true happiness is to be found.

As

As the affections of man are active and restless in their nature, they must have their objects; and if these objects are not the *things above*, they will be the things below; and if these things are in their nature unsatisfactory, such an attachment can terminate in nothing but disappointment. The wisest of mankind, who had experienced all the heights of worldly felicity, did long ago pass sentence of condemnation upon the things of the world, as the instruments of vanity and vexation; yet few can find in their hearts to take his word, 'till they have made their unsuccessful experiments, and are convinced by the issue of them. It is a truth, which some happily discover in due time, and which all will see at last, that to expect substantial happiness from the things of this earth, is as impertinent as to seek for the living among the dead. That no real good can be found here, is evident from this one consideration, that whatsoever we find we cannot keep possession of it. Suppose the things never so good in themselves, yet such are the conditions on which we hold them, that they cannot confer upon us the happiness we are looking for. If the cup of life were to be mixed up at the will of the most skilful epicure, the certainty of death, and the uncertainty of the time, are

ingredients which can never be excluded; and they will never fail to embitter the whole. For our life is but a vapour, a thing of no substance, and liable to be dissipated by the next rough blast. If a man is unmindful of this, he is in a state of stupefaction; and stupefaction is not enjoyment: if it lies upon his mind, it will as surely have its effect, as the sound of a passing bell, near at hand, will spoil a concert of music. Besides this, the objects so eagerly sought after are but shadows and delusions; which borrow their greatest value from the error of our imaginations. All the things we behold at present are but the lowest works of our Almighty Creator, and are to endure but for a limited time. The world itself, as well as they that inhabit it, must pass away, as a garment which is worn out, and must be changed for that which is eternal. This being the case, there is something in the soul of man which thirsteth after greater things than are here to be met with. There is in those, who do not extinguish it, an appetite, which will not be satisfied or put off with trifles. When a man has tried the world, and found it full of labour and vanity and disappointment, what can he think? If he thinks at all, he must conclude, either that God made him to disappoint

point him, or that there are other better objects on which he ought to set his affections: and if there are such objects, then there is in man an appetite toward them; for where there is no appetite, there can be no enjoyment. But earthly things, when they are abused, have this unhappy effect, that they spoil the taste: and therefore it is said, that if any man *love the world*, the love of the Father is not in him. It is wisely represented to us in the parable, that they whose affections were engaged by worldly occupations, partook not of that heavenly feast, which was provided for them: but the *halt*, the *lame*, and the *blind*, being disengaged from the world, were ready for the enjoyment of superior pleasures. And every wise man will endeavour to keep himself in this state of disengagement: he will be thankful to God for any of those losses or disappointments, which serve to remove the mists that are before the eyes of great men, and busy men, and men of pleasure. So long as his mind hath the use of its sight, he will consider every thing in this life under that relation which it bears to eternity: and this will at once lessen the value of such things as have their end as well as their beginning in this life. As often as he looks forward to eter-

nity, he will wish to secure himself a portion there; and with this view, he will attend to the methods proposed to him in divine Revelation. He will seek for such information, as shall not only improve his head but purify his heart: for the word of God cannot make us *wise unto salvation*, but as it makes us in the end partakers of it. He will consider his *actions*, as the only sure evidences of his *affections*: for all but ideots act upon such principles as they have, whether good or bad; and therefore the affections of all men are distinguished by their fruits.

Though the things above, of which the text speaks, are not really present to us in themselves, they are present to us in their influences; and in some respect they are also present as the reward of those that seek them. How much pleasure does the miser conceive, in his own imagination, only by contemplating that treasure, which he never uses! Surely then, the Christian may feast his mind with the contemplation of that heavenly treasure, which will be sure not to disappoint him. While his body is circumscribed by this world, and under the dominion of the elements, his heart may be where his treasure is; and thus he may anticipate the joys of heaven, before he

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is put into actual possession of them. His present enjoyment is in his *hope;* one of the greatest pleasures in the world: indeed, so great a pleasure, that some have supposed all the happiness of man to consist in it. They have discovered, that the affections of men are alive and active, so long as they are kept in expectation; but dead and flat when they have nothing more to look for: and, on this ground, they have affirmed, that human happiness is nothing but expectation: a sort of chace, whose pleasure is not in the end, but in the pursuit. If this be so, then the vicissitudes of human life, are one continued series of deception; and no hope is worth entertaining, but the hope of heaven; the only hope that will not make us ashamed at last. It is true, that if we are never so sharp-sighted, all our contemplation will not give us an adequate conception of the things above. We are told, they are such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive them: but it is sufficient for us to know, that they have this one property of lasting for ever. If we remove our affections from the happiness of this world, because we cannot be sure of it; it is a good reason for setting our affections on things above, because they afford

afford that happiness which cannot be taken away from us: and which will probably be advancing, by steps unknown to us, through all the ages of eternity.

We may form some conjecture concerning the sufficiency and fulness of this happiness, by considering the power of that God who has engaged himself to make us happy. If we look around us, we are astonished at the manifestations of his power and wisdom; and cannot but see, how the elements work together for the benefit and support of this habitable world. Hence it may be concluded, that he who hath made his sun to rise upon us in this lower state of our existence, can bring us, in his own good time, to that unspeakable brightness, in comparison of which, the sun himself shall disappear, as the stars are drowned in the light of the morning. For God himself, the fountain of uncreated light, shall enlighten that kingdom, which hath been prepared for us from the beginning of the world. It is said of the new Jerusalem, that *the city* hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God doth enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

If we consider the structure of an human body; how the eye is exquisitely framed to receive

ceive the impressions of the light; the ear to be sensible of sounds; and the skill with which all the organs of circulation and the several instruments of motion are adapted to the kind of life for which the body is now prepared; we can never doubt, but that the same wisdom, which, even in this fallen state, hath so prepared us for all the functions of this present life, will, in the regeneration of things, fit us in like manner with higher and more perfect faculties for the enjoyment of that life which we have in expectation. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God: human nature, with its present weakness, could enjoy nothing amidst that glorious light, which would dazzle and confound all its powers: and therefore, as the Scripture hath greatly expressed it, *mortality* must first be *swallowed up of life*, before we can be capable of enjoying the presence of God, and the glorious scenes of the invisible world.

The man who can raise his mind to the contemplation of these things, will not be mortified when he withdraws himself from the gratifications of sin: for he will find himself above them. A man of years feels no uneasiness because he is without the toys and rattles with which children are delighted: *their* treasure consists

consists in these little things, and their hearts are full of them: but men of skill and science are delighted with what children cannot comprehend. There is just the same difference between the man of pleasure and the man of devotion: the one is a child all his life long: the other is rational and manly in the choice of his objects; which, in their nature, are alone worthy of his attention, and capable of satisfying all the highest affections of the mind and understanding. God hath so ordained, that what is our duty is also our present interest and satisfaction; I mean, the interest of our better part. The good man, by his alliance to God, is certainly more happy, as well as more honourable, than he that is allied only to the world; allowing him to be connected with what we usually look upon as the higher part of it. Should we not think and feel ourselves abundantly happier in the court of Solomon, partakers of his wisdom and splendour, than if we belonged to the train of an Indian prince, who is a black and a savage? Infinitely greater is the difference between the felicity of those who attend upon God, and those who are confined to the pleasures of sense. The eyes of the swine are invincibly directed to the earth, and his neck is inflexible; but man has a countenance

countenance directed toward the heaven; and the smallest star that is visible in the firmament, is incomparably brighter than all the diamonds and gold of the earth, even when human art has united and polished them to the greatest advantage. As the glories of the heaven are more excellent than the splendor of the earth, so is the contemplation of heavenly things better than the enjoyment of earthly. The astronomer, who measures the courses of the stars, and observes all the appearances of the sun, is employed more to his own satisfaction, than the wretch who dwells in the bottom of a mine, and is digging there by the light of a taper, in danger of being overwhelmed with the ragged vault that hangs over his head; or stifled with poisonous damps and vapours. In a word, the *greater* and *better* the objects are, of which we are in pursuit, the higher is the satisfaction afforded by them. The angel is happier than the man, because he has greater things before him: and by parity of reason, the Christian is happier than the man of sensuality. If angels are spectators of what passes here below, how must they look down with pity and contempt on the childish agitations of human affections? on the elevations of pride, the uneasiness of ambition, the misery of covetousness,

ness, the rage of envy, the torment of lust, the noise of drunkenness, and the foolish explosions of immoderate laughter? He who places his affections on such objects as angels are delighted with, is raised to an higher sphere of life than other mortals. A person in such a state is delivered from the storms of passion, and is above the reach of disappointment. If he meets with any innocent gratifications in his passage through life, they are tasted without terror and enjoyed without remorse. The light of the sun gives more pleasure to him than to other men. If he admires the works of God which he now beholds, he understands them as so many pledges, that God will shew him greater things than he hath yet seen or heard*.

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* I have often admired it as a great sentiment in the orator and philosopher of Rome, that men in another life will not only be superior to the sensual pleasures of this life; but that even the virtues required of us in our present state, will then be superfluous and out of place. *Si nobis, cum ex hâc vitâ migraverimus, in beatorum insulis immortale ævum degere liceret, quid opus esset eloquentiâ, cum judicia nulla fierent? Aut ipsis etiam virtutibus? nec enim* fortitudinis *indigeremus, nullo proposito aut labore aut periculo? nec* justitiâ, *cum esset nihil quod appeteretur alieni: nec* temperantiâ *quæ regeret eas, quæ nullæ essent, libidines? ne* prudentiâ *quidem egeremus, nullo delectu proposito bonorum et malorum. Unâ igitur essemus beati cognitione naturæ et scientiâ, quæ sola est,*

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If he is in distress, and tossed about upon the waves of a tempestuous world, he has an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast, fixed in the region of eternity, and is thereby secured against all the agitations of grief and despair. And is not this an enviable state? Yet is it such a state as we may all obtain. Here ambition is laudable, and will not be punished with disappointment. And let me add, that he who does not aspire to this state, is forgetful of his profession as a Christian. In the greatest service of the Church, that of the holy communion, the Priest calls upon the people *to lift up their hearts*; to which they give consent, and make answer, *we lift them up unto the Lord.* They use the language of men, who profess to be above the world, and aspire to heavenly things. And this indeed is their proper character. By their baptism they are *risen with Christ* to a new and heavenly state of life; and, if they are consistent with themselves, they must think, and speak, and act, as men who are raised to new and sublime expectations.

deorum vitâ laudanda. Ex quo intelligi potest, cætera necessitatis esse, unum hoc voluptatis. This is from a fragment of the Discourse of *Cicero*, intitled, *Hortensius*; which was extant in the time of *St. Augustine*, and, by his own account, prepared his mind for the purer doctrines of Christianity.

tions. Thus argues the Apostle in the words of the text: *if ye be risen with Christ*, says he, *seek the things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God: set your affection on things above.* If he has overcome death, and we as members of him are partakers in that victory, we are not to lie like the dead *Lazarus*, bound about with the *grave-clothes* of our worldly affection. If Christ sitteth above, as our representative and fore-runner; we must rise up from darkness and the shadow of death, to follow him with our hearts and affections; knowing that we shall hereafter follow him in body as well as in spirit. For though it is undoubtedly true, that death shall prevail over our mortal part; yet the grave shall give up our bodies, when he who now sitteth at the right hand of God shall descend from his seat of glory, and call them from the four winds of heaven. This is what the Pſalmist alludes to in those remarkable words —*though ye have lien among the pots*, broken to pieces like frail earthen vessels, *yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove, that is covered with silver wings, and her feathers like gold:* the spirit of God, that mystic dove, shall lend its wings to raise you from dissolution, and convey you aloft to the regions of eternity.

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This prospect is so well secured to us, that our hopes may now begin to take possession of our inheritance. And this is the encouragement given us by the Apostle, to set our affection on things above. He has another reason, which is indeed but a member of the same argument. For if we are risen with Christ in our *baptism* to a *new life*; it is equally true, that in the same baptism we are *dead with him* to the things of this life. And thence he argues, *if ye be dead with Christ, why, as though living in the world are ye subject* to such things as are to *perish with the using?* This subjection to perishable things, is the great mistake of mortal man; separating him from the knowledge and love of God; and consequently, from all the great objects of the world to come. It is not possible to know the things of God, while our hearts are set upon the world. Ignorance of God will cherish earthly affections; and earthly affections will end in a separation from God. One of these cases was exemplified in the heathens; the other in the Jews. The heathens did not like to retain God in their knowledge, and so were given up to *vile affections:* the Jews had set their affections on the world, and so lost the knowledge of God. It

signifies not which end we begin at: for the issue is the same either way.

Upon the whole then, it is the proper business of man in this world, to set his affections on things above: in this is our wisdom, our wealth, our hope, and our happiness: therefore it should be an affront to the understandings of rational men, to desire them to follow what is so desirable in itself. Let me then take it for granted, that they who hear me, wish to attain to this heavenly practice, and only want to know how it is to be done. To this the answer is short: consider what your hope is as Christians, and learn what this world is, and then your affections cannot make any mistake, without doing it wilfully. To know that you have an inheritance in a better world, purchased by the death of Christ, and sealed to you by his Resurrection; I say, to know this, and not to desire it is impossible. And on the other hand, to see that the Things of this world are vain, deceitful and perishable; and yet to admire and seek them, is equally impossible. How then does it happen, that we see so few aspiring to the things above, and such multitudes swallowed up by the things on the earth? What can be said, but that men are blind to

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the deceitfulness of the world, and to the glories of heaven; and so like the blind are wandering out of the way. That any should be found so senseless as to prefer earth to heaven, and sensuality to immortality, is a certain proof, that there is some radical error in our nature, derived to us from the mistake of our first parents, and never to be corrected but by the power of divine Grace, and the diligent study of the word of God. Every man is born with that clay upon his eyes, which must be washed away by him, who was sent from heaven for that purpose; and then he may see all things clearly. Then he may shake off that folly of preferring dust and ashes to the riches of eternity; when things eternal, and things temporal are compared, it seems the easiest thing in the world to chuse between them; and yet it is the hardest; because it is impossible to love the things of heaven, without that principle of *faith*, which gives us a sight of them. In this is the great difference between the Christian and the man of the world; that the one walks by sense, and the other by faith. The Christian ascends through faith and hope to the love of God; and when he has attained to that, his affections are placed where they ought to be.

If you would plainly understand the difference between these two sorts of men, view them upon their death-beds. When death approaches, the Christian finds himself drawing nearer to the objects he has desired: but the man of the world is hasting toward those terrors of the Lord, which he has vainly endeavoured to forget. The one parts with what he never valued, and in exchange looks for that which never can decay: the other is torn away against his will from all he has delighted in, never more to be delighted with any thing. The one leaves his friends, with a certainty of meeting such of them, as are worth finding, in a better world: the other leaves all good men, without the hope of conversing with them any more. The one is at length conveyed by Angels to the bosom of Abraham; the other goes, where he went, who had received the good things in this life.

Who can make this comparison without saying, in the words of Balaam, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!* Let us then remember, my friends, and let us never forget it, that the righteous dies this death, because in his life-time, he *set his affection on things above.* Which that

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we may all do in like manner, God of his great mercy grant, and assist us therein daily, for the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

SERMON III.

COME, SEE THE PLACE WHERE THE LORD LAY. MATTH. XXVIII. 6.

IN these words, the Angel which descended from heaven at the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, invited those holy women, who came to seek for him, to look into his sepulchre, and see how the present state of things demonstrated to their senses, that he, who had been laid there three days before, was risen from the dead. On this day, the same words call upon us, and all Christians, to go along with them to the sepulchre of Christ; there to meditate on the certainty, and the wonderful manner, and the glorious power of his Resurrection. This is the use I mean to make of the words: I shall

I shall suppose, that you and I on this blessed day are going together to that garden of Joseph of Arimathea, where was a new tomb hewed in a rock, with a ſtone rolled to the mouth of it; the body of Jesus being buried within it, and a guard of Roman ſoldiers keeping watch without it: and that when we come there, we find such things as those devout women did, who came early in the morning to visit the place. With those things before us, we shall be affected nearly as they were; and consequently we shall be delighted and edified. There is not one circumstance attending the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, which doth not carry instruction with it; and therefore I shall consider them nearly in the same order in which they happened, and shew you the meaning and the reasons of these wonderful things. In all such events as relate to our Salvation, the Providence of God disposes the circumstances in such a manner, that they give us light and learning; and they were undoubtedly recorded for our instruction and edification.

The first circumstance attending the Resurrection of Christ may serve as a speeimen, to teach what we may expect from the rest. In the first verse of the 28th chapter of St. Matthew, we are told, that the Resurrection hap-

pened as *it dawned toward the first day of the week*. St. Mark says, more expressly, that it was at the *rising of the sun*. Here then you see, as on many other occasions, the natural works of God bearing testimony to his spiritual works for the salvation of man. At the crucifixion of Christ the sun was darkened; and from the duration of the darkness for the space of three hours, we may infer that this darkness happened from an eclipse of the sun: the natural sun failing in its light, so long as the Sun of Righteousness, who is the true light of man, was suffering upon the cross. So at his resurrection, the Sun of Grace and the sun of nature rise together. From whence this inference is necessary, that he is, as he said of himself, the true light; and, that he is the author of a new life to the world, as the sun begins a new day. We learn that as nature rises with the sun, so doth the world rise with Jesus Christ, and receive life and immortality from his resurrection: and it is not improbable, but that where he is said to have *brought to light*, that is (as the word signifies) to have *illuminated, life and immortality*, his resurrection at the rising of the sun may be referred to: for certainly his resurrection did diffuse life, as truly as the sun did then bring on

on the day. Therefore every rising of the sun should remind us of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. When we receive the benefit of every day's light, we should return thanks for the light of life and immortality, by the resurrection of our Lord. And this is the grand reason why natural things and spiritual are thus coupled together, that in the one way we may daily read the other; and that the ſight of Nature may lead us to our prayers. Happy are they who make this use of it. The rising of the sun is a glorious sight; but it is only the pattern of a more excellent glory, and as such, a Chriſtian should daily consider it.

The next observable circumstance is that of the earthquake: and here the resurrection of our Lord teaches us what we are to expect at the general resurrection of the dead; when the earth shall tremble as if it were under the pangs of delivery. That a dreadful shaking of the earth shall precede or attend the raising of the dead, is to be gathered from those other occasions, on which a resurrection was brought to pass. At the crucifixion, when Jesus expired, the earth shook, and the rocks were rent, and the graves were opened, and the bodies of saints arose. So again, when he was rising from the dead, there was *a great earthquake*. And the like had

had happened before in that vision of the prophet Ezekiel, when the dry bones were raised to life *. "As I prophesied, said he, there was a noise and a shaking (the word signifies *an earthquake*) and the bones came together bone to his bone." Whether this great shaking of the earth be intended as a circumstance of solemnity and terror; or whether it be necessary, as an operative cause, toward that great effect of opening the graves, and bringing forth the dead, and restoring their bodies to life and motion; can be known only to God, who hath the direction of this great event: but so it will be, and we shall all feel it.

We may gather farther, that as this earthquake happened when the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, to minister in the work of our Saviour's resurrection; so will the whole earth be shaken, at that moment of time, when the Son of Man shall descend in the clouds to call the dead from their graves, and to sit in judgment upon them. So the Psalmist saith, "the earth trembled when God arose to judg-"ment."

The work of the angel of the Lord, and the effects of his appearance are wonderfully described, and in such words as are very striking to

* Ez. xxxvii. 7. [compare xxxviii. 19].

to the imagination. For my own part, I feel myself tremble when I read them. He came; and with power and force more than mortal, he rolled away the massey stone from the door of the sepulchre, and then seated himself upon it in defiance; while his face shone bright as lightning, and his raiment was white as snow. If the description of this is so affecting, what must the sight have been? It was intended to confound the enemies of Jesus Christ; who were keeping watch, and supposed they could confine him in his grave by force of arms! They saw this bright messenger repair to the door of the sepulchre, to set the dead at liberty; but they dared not to interrupt him, for they were trembling and dying with fear. Such is the weakness of human force, and the folly of human wisdom, when it opposes the designs of God, and the forces of heaven. What can a sword or a spear do, when it is held up against a flash of lightening?

From the case of these keepers, all the enemies of Jesus Christ may understand what shall happen to themselves, when he shall descend from heaven to complete the work of our redemption. They act now with confidence, while they think him sleeping, and suppose they may insult his religion with impunity:

ty: but he shall awake to avenge the cause of his word, and of his Church; and then these bold men shall be trembling and dying with fear.

In the mean while the same manifestation of divine power which confounds them, shall bring comfort and deliverance to the Church: even as the angel answered to the women who came to seek the Lord, *fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified.*

It doth not appear that the presence of the angel was attended with that dazzling brightness to them, as when he first descended, and struck terror into the guards. It seems from the relation of St. Mark, that they had entered into the sepulchre before they saw him; and there he was found as a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment. There was nothing more than this to excite their terror; but affrighted they were; not expecting such a sight. As to the guards they were gone; and St. Matthew tells us, they came to the city, as the women who went to visit the sepulchre were going out of it.

The two forms therefore under which the angel of the Lord was seen, by the guards, and by the holy women, were very different; the former was attended with power and terror and

and defiance; the other was as that of a gentle and peaceable messenger from heaven, sent to enlighten and comfort the friends of Jesus under their perplexity and affliction. Such are the different forms and effects of the manifestations of God to the people of this world. The enemies of God find themselves uneasy under all his visitations, and never expect any good from him. They trust in their own power, as the Roman guards trusted in their weapons: therefore God resisteth them, and they are disappointed and confounded. They have nothing to do but to make their escape for a time, and put the best face they can upon their own miscarriages, as we shall find it happened in the present case. But to the friends of God all his visitations are attended with the information and comfort they wish for: and however they may be tried and perplexed for a time, their sorrow is turned into joy. A great sight and a great event had agitated the spirits of those holy women; but their fear had such a mixture of joy with it, that there is not one amongst us who would not be glad to feel himself in their situation.

All things shall be after the same pattern, when Jesus Christ shall descend from heaven at the last day. When he shall appear in the clouds, the

the most devout saint upon earth shall be amazed, and tremble inwardly at the sight; but what comfort shall he feel at the same time, when he now sees that his *Redeemer liveth*, and is come *to stand in the latter day upon the earth*. On the other hand, the wicked shall feel that the day of vengeance is come; that their own power is blasted, and that the sight which appears brings nothing to them but terror: so they can only desire to make their escape, and hide themselves from the face of their judge.

But now let us consider how the two parties who attended the sepulchre were employed. The women are called upon to see the place where the Lord lay; the guards are fled from it to their friends in the city. The women are instructed to bear the glad tidings of the resurrection to the disciples: the soldiers are bribed to report a lie about it, to make their friends easy, and furnish an excuse to all the enemies of Jesus Christ. As the women went to tell the disciples, Jesus himself met them: and we may well suppose that the sight of him affected them as it had never done before. They were now assured that he was immortal and divine; so they fell down before him with fear and reverence, and worshipped him as their Lord

and their God. But he saith unto them, *be not afraid; go tell my brethren, &c.* How comfortable is this message to us as well as to them!—*Go tell my brethren.*—For he who saith this was raised from the dead only as the *first born of many brethren*; and with him thus raised, we are begotten to a new life, and made the sons of God. While they were delivering these blessed tidings to the Apostles, the soldiers had carried their information to the Chief Priests, and had thrown them into no small confusion. They met together immediately; but rather privately as we may suppose; and, without any noise, consulted together what was best to be done. Consider, first what they had heard, and then you will understand the nature of their plot better, and see farther into the wickedness of the human heart, and the cause of its most evil workings. You will see, that mistakes in religion, though lightly spoken of, as things only of a speculative concern, make people more wicked, more false, cruel and malicious in their actions, than any sensual affection.

The soldiers, it is said, shewed unto the Chief Priests *all the things that were done.* They shewed them, that while they were keeping watch, and broad awake, as guards were obliged

obliged to be at the peril of their lives, a light beyond the brightness of the sun, came upon them all at once; and an Angel marched through them up to the sepulchre, and rolled away the stone from the mouth of it, though too weighty for any man to stir it; and that they had seen him sit down upon it when he had done, while they were unable to stir from the ground, and were terrified out of their strength, and nearly out of their senses. That the sepulchre being now open, the body of Jesus was certainly gone, while they were under this state of fear and amazement, and that he was actually risen from the dead.

Had the Chief Priests felt in their minds as you feel at the hearing of these things, they would have been pricked to the heart with the sense of their own guilt and folly; and have said—"Then is Jesus of Nazareth our true "Messiah, whose doctrine we contradicted, "whose person we persecuted, and put him to "death at last as a malefactor and a felon! Let us "turn then from our errors; let us forsake our "evil ways, and pray that he will pardon our ig-"norance, and receive us to his favour, that we "may at last partake of his salvation." Thus you would have said. But what did they say? Instead of confessing their sin, they added to

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all their other counsels and plots, one more, which was the last and worst of all: they hired the soldiers, who had been witnesses of his resurrection, to deny it, and to confirm the slander they had published before, that his disciples would come by night, and steal him away, and then pretend that he was risen from the dead.

I shall not stay to examine the folly and absurdity of this lie; which tells us, that soldiers were asleep, who were to be punished with death for confessing it: that they knew what was done while they were asleep: that the Disciples who had fled with fear when their Master was condemned in the judgment hall, had turned mad all of a sudden, and exposed themselves to the arms of the Roman guards, to make the desperate attempt of stealing away the body of their Master; that is, to bring death upon themselves if they should succeed, and everlasting contempt upon him and his religion: and moreover, that in the hurry of their theft, they had time to lay all the linnen clothes by in an orderly manner, and to fold up the napkin that was bound about his head, as they were found by those who visited the sepulchre. These things are so obvious that it is not worth while to insist upon them. I shall therefore de-

sire to consider what was the *cause* of this vile conduct of the Chief Priests? They had fallen into many religious notions, which were contrary to the preaching of Jesus Christ, and therefore they could not endure him or his doctrine. They would not believe him; and they could not answer him nor resist the force of his miracles. Under this state of things, there arises a battle between truth and falsehood; and when proud men fail of argument, they have nothing to depend upon but lying; and one lie produces another, till they are involved and embarrassed past all recovery. Thus it hath always been, and always will be. Mistakes in religion make men wickeder than any other principle upon earth. Religious blindness is the worst of ignorance; and religious pride is more cruel and mischievous than any other. When the mind is under religious delusion, especially such delusion as flatters the evil passions of avarice, lust, and ambition; they mistake their wickedness for godliness; and so become incapable of shame or remorse. This was the case of the Jews and the Heathens; and therefore, in opposing the Gospel, they perpetrated more outrageous acts of falsehood, injustice and cruelty, than men had ever done upon any other principle before.

Did

Did the world ever hear of two such shameless lies, as those of the Jews? That Christ cast out devils by the power of Belzebub: and that when he was raised from the dead he was stolen away by his disciples? and when one wicked wretch has invented a lie, the rest of his party fall into it, and spread it abroad. Thus you find, that when one assembly had invented the lie which the soldiers were to publish, the whole body of the Jews afterwards took up the story and held to it: for the Evangelist adds, "and this saying is commonly reported among "the Jews to this day." God deliver us therefore from pride, malice, and ignorance, which when united together form what we call *religious bigotry*. No falsehood can be too absurd for this bigotry to propagate; no action can be too unjust or cruel for it to perpetrate.

When we think on these things, we cannot but lament that the hearts of men are so miserably divided by false opinions. Hence we shall be led to set a greater value upon truth; which never fails to unite them. But best of all it is, to look with pity and compassion upon those who are in error, and to pray for them; that their pride may be humbled, their ignorance informed, and their hearts turned to peace and charity: for so long as we can pray for men,

we shall never be angry with them, how great soever may be their errors and offences. We must expect, that some for malice, as the priests; and some for interest, as the soldiers; will go on lying to the end of the world; and the appearance of an angel from heaven would not cure them: for the more the truth is manifested, the more will some people hate it. Disaffection is a deaf adder which hears no reason; a blind mole which sees no evidence: and obstinacy instead of being softened, is only hardened the more by the labour you bestow upon it, like iron under the hammer: which is only beaten closer into its own body. How common is it for one man to hate and rail at another, only because he has injured him. The priests and rulers of the Jews having despised and opposed our Saviour's doctrine, and finding it all confirmed by his resurrection, were brought to the tremendous dilemma, either of being converted, or of denying the resurrection: and you see which part they took. As bad people go on from bad to worse, it is wonderful to see what trouble those Jews gave themselves in running about the world, to poison the minds of men with their lying reports, and hinder the spreading of the Gospel! as if the best thing that ever came from heaven

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ven had been the worst of all! And the more it prevailed, the more were they disappointed and enraged. They preserved their influence with the Heathens against the Christians, till the time when their city was destroyed and their temple burned; and from thence they became vagabonds and slaves, contemptible to all the world.

In their conduct relating to the resurrection of Christ, one circumstance more is observable. We are frequently informed in the Gospel how covetous these Jews were, and how devoted to the world. But one bad passion is frequently overcome by another, as the wild beast will sometimes fall upon and devour his fellow, if he is the stronger and the more hungry of the two. Thus did the malice of the Jews get the better of their covetousness; for well as they loved their money, they could readily part with it for the gratification of their malice. The elders gave *large money* to the soldiers to say as they were bid, and deny their senses. No small sum must have been requisite to quiet those men, whose minds were big, and ready to burst, with so great and terrible a secret. Covetousness is a vice which lays fast hold upon the mind, and forces men upon many unjust and mean, and even cruel actions: but

pride and malice are of more force: so they who devoured widows houses, and could sell the children of them to make a little profit, could part with their money freely when their pride and their malice were in danger. Such contrarieties are not peculiar to Jews; the case is the same with Christians, when their passions have drawn them into a snare: they are engaged, and must go on whatever it costs.

I have now gone through the peculiar circumstances of our Saviour's resurrection. Very instructive they are when we rightly consider and apply them: therefore every Christian, at this season of the year, should visit in heart and mind the tomb of Jesus Christ, to see where he was laid, and how he was raised, and what are the consequences upon ourselves and others; that is, upon believers and unbelievers.

To make a right use of this occasion, and store our minds with such reflexions as arise from it, may be of service to us through the whole year, till the season comes about to us, if it shall please God to let us see the return of it. On Good-Friday we commemorate the sorrows and sufferings of Christ; his death and burial. On this day we celebrate the glory of his resurrection. In these two memorable days we find the example of the whole Christian life and

and character. All of it is compounded as it were of Good Friday and Easter Day; that is, of sorrow and joy, of abasement and exaltation. With Christ, such as he was at his passion, we must expect to be opposed, and clamoured against, afflicted, persecuted, tried by the searchings of divine visitations, and bereft of all present support from heaven. With Christ, as he was on this day, we are more than conquerors, rejoicing in the possession of life, and in the hope of glory. Sometimes we are even buried, and a stone of despair is rolled to the door of our sepulchre; but God doth not leave our soul in hell, nor suffer the spiritual life that is within us to see corruption. Before this happens, his Angel is sent down to restore us to life and liberty.

This inequality, or contrariety, in the Christian character, is finely painted by the Apostle. —"We are troubled, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair: persecuted, but not forsaken: cast down, but not destroyed— we are delivered unto death, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. We are, in short, a composition of death and life; of death through sin; and of life through the grace of God and the power of Christ's resurrection.

As the commemoration of Christ's sufferings and resurrection shews us the forms and changes of our present state; so according to the state we are in, our minds should be turned toward Good Friday or Easter Day. Is any under persecution or affliction? let him look to Jesus, as the wounded Israelites looked up to the serpent in the wilderness; remembering that he was lifted up, to draw unto him all that are tried, oppressed, and afflicted. Is any in joy and prosperity? let him remember in his mirth, that as there is no enjoyment of the world without health, there can be no prosperity in the soul of a Christian, but in virtue of Christ's resurrection. Therefore, when the Christians anciently gave to one another the salutation of friendship and chearfulness, it was their custom to say, "*The Lord is risen.*"

And now, lastly, you will take me right, if I venture to give you one admonition at this season, which relates more immediately to ourselves and our affairs.

You will have notice that we are to meet tomorrow morning, for the election of proper persons to serve the church and the parish. Give me leave, my brethren, to remind you, that this congregation was unanimous last year; and that we have enjoyed many comforts and blessings

sings in consequence of it ever since. Your church is in a flourishing state: the duties of divine worship are regularly performed; the children of the poor are instructed; not a few of them are clothed; and many of them are greatly improved. Your minister can do little without your kind encouragement and assistance: but with it, he may do much: and your church, which is now a praise in the neighbourhood, may possibly become an example to a considerable part of this kingdom. It is therefore your duty, as members of the church, to act for the good of the church; as citizens and subjects, to act for the preservation of peace; as Christians to act for the praise and glory of God; and, as Englishmen, to act for the security of your own religious rights and liberties; without listening to, and without fearing, any persons who may feel themselves inclined to deprive you of them.

Follow then your own happiness with wisdom and resolution; but not without that spirit of peace and brotherly love, which will always be attended with the blessing of God.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHICH DIE IN THE LORD FROM HENCEFORTH: YEA SAITH THE SPIRIT, THAT THEY MAY REST FROM THEIR LABOURS: AND THEIR WORKS DO FOLLOW THEM. REV. XIV. 13.

DISCOURSES at funerals were formerly more common than at present. It is to be lamented they have been so much out of use; because they were intended as much for the edification of the living as the commemoration of the dead. What is then delivered falls into the hearts of the hearers, while they are struck with a solemn scene, and softened by the subject of death, in which they are all so nearly concerned. *O that they were wise, that they would consider their latter end.*

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On such an occasion as this, death is set before their eyes, and they cannot avoid the consideration of it. While that thought is upon them, all men are wise, and then it is our time to speak to them.

I shall therefore make use of the present opportunity to give you some necessary instruction concerning the nature of death: after which, it will be expected that I should say something of the good example we have now before us.

The text saith, *blessed are the dead:* which words, if taken by themselves, are not true. Death, to man in that state wherein the fall hath left him, is not a blessing but a curse. It is the wages of sin; and as such, it is not an accident of nature, but a punishment. Therefore the progress of man's life is like the journey of a criminal from the gaol to the place of execution. As things are now, life is the road to death; therefore God taught his servants to use it as such, and live only as *pilgrims and strangers upon earth.*

The death of man being a death in sin, it was accounted unclean; and thence it was ordained, that they who had touched a dead body, should afterwards be washed and purified with water; which, in the moral sense, was a lesson

lesson to the people to abstain from such *dead works*, as are contrary to a life of purity, such as is required in the servants of God.

Death is also a disgrace: for no man can suffer as a malefactor without shame. To be numbered with transgressors, and die by the hand of justice, hath always been accounted infamous: and such is now the death inflicted upon fallen man by the justice of God.

All these things are true of death considered in itself; but to a Christian it is another thing. *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth.* In the first chapter of the Revelation, Jesus Christ appears to the Evangelist as a conqueror over death, and saith—*Fear not—I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death. Henceforth*, from this appearance and this declaration, we are to date the blessedness of the dead. Jesus Christ hath changed the nature of death by partaking of it for our sakes. In consequence of which, our death is no longer a punishment for sin, but a sacrifice, with a *benediction* upon it, like that commemorative sacrifice of his own body, which he brake and blessed. Thus our death is no longer to be abhorred as sinful and unclean, but as attended, like the holy death of Christ,

Christ, with myrrh, aloes and frankincense; to signify our acceptance with God, and our preservation to immortality, when the corruptible shall put on incorruption.

The shame and disgrace of our death is removed from us by that shame which Christ endured upon the cross. He suffered such a death as the law of Moses pronounced to be *cursed* in its kind, that our death might be *blessed.*

But now we are to remember, this change takes place on those only who *die in the Lord*; that is, on those who are in the Lord at their death. By which it is to be understood, that they die members of his mystical body, the Church, by baptism: which consideration assures us, that infants, so made members of him, are *in the Lord*; and if they die, they die in the Lord: their death is blessed, and they enter into rest; as the new-born children of the Hebrews passed over Jordan into the promised land, without undergoing the trials of the wilderness. If they grow up to years of discretion, they must live in the other ordinances of God; they must *keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus*; they must live in private devotion, and in the public worship of the congregation. They must lead the life of *soldiers* under

under the captain of their salvation; as the Hebrews fought under Joshua against the enemies of God, before they could obtain a peaceable settlement in the land of Canaan.

If thus prepared, there is *no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.* For if any man is really in Christ, he is a new creature: he leads a new life, and that ends in a new death: the blessedness of which, according to the text, consists in these two particulars; first, that they, who die in this state of renovation, *rest from their labours*; and secondly, that *their works do follow them.*

The labours of life, and the Rest of death, were signified to us from the beginning of the world: for God worked upon the six days of the creation, and then rested upon the seventh; giving us a promise and a pattern, that if we labour with him, we shall rest with him. No Rest was necessary to him; for the holy one of Israel neither slumbereth nor sleepeth: a world cometh forth into being, and is arranged into order and perfection at his word. He rested therefore for our instruction: to teach us, that the labour of this life, if it is for good, like that of God, will certainly end in the Rest of heaven. And we learn farther, by plain inference from this example, that there can be no rest for man,

man, properly so called, 'till the *works* of this life are *done* and over.

There is a passage, wonderfully beautiful and instructive, on this subject, in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews—*He that is entered into his Rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.* In which the Apostle means, that the Christian who is departed, and hath ceased from the works of life, and not till then, enters into a state of Rest; which is not a mere cessation from labour, but a rest which is *blessed* and *sanctified*; and which is also heavenly and eternal, because it is called the Rest of God—"if they shall enter, saith he, into *my Rest.*"

Hence again, we have another sure inference, that there will be no rest for those who do not labour: *the sleep of a labouring man is sweet:* he that will rest with God, must work with God. The idle and the unprofitable have their rest here (such as it is) and their trouble is to come after. Lazarus is carried by the angels to his Repose, in what is called the bosom of Abraham; and they fall into a place of torment, where their eyes are at last *open* (they were shut all their life-time) only to discover that their condition is miserable and hopeless. Instead of having angels ready to receive

receive them at their death, they fall into the company and custody of those, to whose advice and direction they committed themselves in their life-time, without seeing their guides: but now they see their keepers.

The true Rest not only presupposes labour, but that this labour is of the right sort. *They rest from* their *labours*, saith the text; that is, from such labours as Christian men, who live and die in the Lord, are engaged in and exercised with. Wicked men have their labours; and the devil himself is always at work. Few men are more zealous and active than they who have ends of sin or mischief to promote. Such is the deceitfulness of sin, that many of the works of vice are very laborious and distressing to those who are occupied therein. But such labour doth not lead men to Rest; it keeps them for life under the torment and disappointment of their passions; which trouble them perpetually, as winds and tides give an unceasing motion to the sea. And it is too commonly followed by an hopeless death. The pains which tear them from the body are but the beginning of their sorrows.

The labours intended in the text, are the labours of good men; and we are to enquire more particularly into the nature of them, because

cause it is added, *their works do follow them.* The works of their life are not forgotten; an account is taken of them all: they are noted in God's book. Their works follow with the fruits of them, and they shall reap as they have sowed. None of their labours shall be in vain in the Lord; but all shall be repaid in their kind; as the husbandman who hath sowed wheat receives a crop of the same grain, and that with an abundant increase.

For their labours of mercy, they shall find mercy, even the forgiveness of their sins, in that great day, when all shall stand in need of it.

What they gave in faith to the poor brethren of Christ on earth, shall be repaid in treasure from the stores of heaven.

What they gave up in this world, through an uncoveting poverty of spirit, they shall possess in the kingdom of God. What they gave up was temporal; what they shall receive will be eternal.

If they delighted in peace, and laboured to promote it, they shall be reckoned among the children of God; and be heirs together with Jesus Christ, who came to make peace between heaven and earth.

By enduring persecution for righteousness

sake, they shall be received as friends by the blessed company of heaven. Angels will welcome into their society those whom wicked and envious men defamed, as if they were not worthy to live; when in fact, the world was not worthy of them.

For these and other of their labours, great shall be their reward in heaven; they shall be numbered with prophets, martyrs, and saints, in glory everlasting.

The admonition arising from all this doctrine is expressed for us in few words by the Apostle —*let us labour, therefore, to enter into that Rest*; the plain interpretation is, let us *study* to enter into that Rest; which none will find, but they who make it their study to obtain it: labouring with this assurance, that as certainly as the six days of work are followed by the Sabbath, so surely will the labours of faith be followed by that *Sabbatism* (that *State of Rest* signified by the Sabbath) which remaineth for the people of God. And as you see that all men have not a share in the Sabbath here, but either neglect the use, or despise the blessings of it; so it will be hereafter. Many are following their own vain pleasures on the Lord's day; many are absent from the church; and some sotting away their time in public houses;

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many are drudging at the accounts of their worldly occupations, rather preferring incessant labour for themselves, and the poor unfortunate beasts which serve them, than partaking thankfully of that holy relaxation which God hath given them in great goodness, for the ease of their bodies, and the edification of their minds. Such poor mistaken souls were found among the Israelites, who were led out of Egypt by Moses: they had no taste for that Rest which was before them, but *thought scorn of the pleasant land,* and lusted after the ways of Egypt; where they had been in bondage, under that idle people, who kept them constantly to hard labour. Yet thither did those besotted people wish to go again, rather than follow God into a land of liberty. So they fell short in the wilderness, and never saw the blessings of Canaan. Their example is followed by thousands of perverse people, who are enemies to themselves, and lust after their own misery: leading a life of more labour and sorrow than God ever imposed upon any of *his* servants, and finding no rest in death. Their example is proposed to *us,* that we may *not* follow it. Let us therefore labour to enter into that rest, that we may not *fall after the same example of unbelief:* then

shall we rest from our labours, and our works will follow us.

Your minds will now be naturally asking the question, how far the things which have been spoken are applicable to the present occasion? You will expect I should make that application: and I should be unkind to you, and unjust to the departed, if I were to avoid it.

To speak of those who are gone, is often dangerous; because, perhaps, we cannot speak well, and humanity and decency forbid us to speak ill. To say the truth, I verily believe, it is partly owing to the decay of Christian piety, and the increasing corruption of the times, that funeral sermons are gone so much out of fashion: because so few are now found who are fit for them. However, we are under no difficulties of that kind in the instance now before us: had I thought so, I should by no means have made it my own choice, as I have done, to appear in the pulpit on this occasion.

Of our dear sister here departed, nothing can be said but what is good, and may edify the hearers. Such indeed was her own meekness and lowliness of mind, that she would have taken all praise for flattery; and I dare not have spoken it: but we may speak now without

without offence. How many useful, humble, exemplary characters there are in private life, who are never spoken of in public, to the end that their virtues may be applauded and imitated: who pass off the stage of life unknown and unnoticed; like the flowers which blow in a pathless wilderness, and fall to the ground in secret!

Nothing was more distinguishable in her character, than that persevering quietness and mildness of spirit, which seemed never to have been moved to speak evil of any one. What a peaceable, and what a happy world would this be, if all were of that mind! It is very remarkable, that one of the last good offices of her life, was an affectionate attempt to restore the disturbed mind of a neighbour to the comforts of peace and reconciliation. By which we may judge, that, among her other good gifts, she would have bequeathed to us all, if it had been in her power, that blessed spirit of peace which regulated and adorned her own life. If she could have done this, I hope there are none here present who would not have been ready to receive it and cultivate it; because it would make *them* happy, as it did *her*, and bring them nearer to that kingdom of peace, to which she is translated.

Her patience, under a long and afflicting state of infirmity, was wonderful to those who were witnesses of it: and you all know, how she resisted it, and struggled with it, that she might appear in this place, and join with the congregation in the praise and worship of God; never giving it up, 'till within a very short time of her death.

Of her charity to the poor, I may tell *you*, but I need not tell *them*, they have felt it, and will continue to feel it; for her hand is stretched out to them still.

Her zeal to the Church of England will always be acknowledged, from the provision she has made for the better accommodation of a minister to serve the church in this place: which, though not wanted at present, may be of much future benefit, and prevent this church and parish from being neglected hereafter, as they have been in time past. If they who have robbed, destroyed, and profaned churches, have been visited by the just judgment of God, whereof we have notorious instances in the history of this country, they who contribute to their support, may justly expect to be blessed in themselves, and in those who succeed to their possessions. The church therefore, which owes so much to her, ought at least

least to pay the present debt of respect and gratitude to her memory; and it would scarcely have been decent in me to have omitted it. This is all *we* have in our power: what is more substantial, must be left to that great God, whose honour and worship she was so studious to promote.

It is not the least of her praise, that she disposed all her affairs with the utmost prudence and impartiality. You may think this a matter beneath our notice: but prudence is the mother of many and great virtues; and it was such in her; indeed it seems to have been the leading part of her character.

We may then, I trust, say with assurance, that she is of the number of those, who *die in the Lord*, and whose *works do follow them.*

What she is now, we must all be; and God only knows how soon the strongest and the boldest amongst us may become such. But if we wish to be what she shall be hereafter; if we would die with her expectations, we must follow the example of her meekness, and patience, and charity. If we would die the death of the righteous, we must lead the life of the righteous; there is no other way: *Be ye* then *followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

SERMON V.

AND THEY CAME OVER UNTO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SEA, INTO THE COUNTRY OF THE GADARENES.

AND WHEN HE WAS COME OUT OF THE SHIP, IMMEDIATELY THERE MET HIM OUT OF THE TOMBS A MAN WITH AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT. MARK V. 1, 2.

THE miracles of our Saviour are commonly understood, as acts of divine power, which were intended to shew, that he was the Son of God and the King of Israel. All his miracles were undoubtedly so many testimonies that he was sent from God: but they were much more than this; for they were all of such a *kind*, and attended with such *circumstances*, as gave us an insight into the spiritual state of man, and the great work of his salvation.

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In this miraculous account of the man with the unclean spirit in the country of the Gadarenes, we behold, on the one side, a work of the Devil, and on the other, a contrary work of Jesus Christ, who came *to destroy the works of the Devil.* From the example of this poor wretch, in his state of possession, we see plainly what it is to be *under the power of Satan.* Such as this man was, such would he make of every man that is born into the world, if he were permitted of God so to do; he would make him restless, and shameless, and senseless, and furious. This poor Gadarene fled from the society of men, and had his dwelling in nakedness among the tombs and mountains; places which suited with the melancholy state of his mind. When he was bound with chains, they were broken in sunder; nothing could tame him: night and day he was *crying and cutting himself with stones.*

In all this we have an example of the power of Satan upon the hearts of men: his works are always the same in kind, though their effects do not always appear in the same form. He works by sin just as effectually as by the indwelling of a legion: for sin, where it gets possession, bereaves men of their wits; it is inconsistent with the rational enjoyment of life; and

and leads to melancholy and misery in some, in others to revellings and ravings, by night and by day: none of the obligations which bind good men to their duty have an effect upon it; it breaks through them all. Consider, whether the determined idle sot is not a *madman* to all intents and purposes: he has no sense of his duty toward his wife and children: natural affection hath no hold upon him, though it can bind a brute beast: his fortune, his health, his soul are of no account with him; there he sits raving and destroying himself; an enemy to his own flesh; like the poor possessed man, who cut himself with stones, till his head was broken, and he was of consequence a ghastly spectacle, covered with his own blood; as the drunkard, in his ravings, is frequently seen to be.

When a man is come to this pass, what can be done with him? Will you offer him reasons? He hears none; for he has no reason in himself which you can lay hold of or apply to. Nothing but the power of Jesus Christ, nothing but a miracle of grace, can bring such an one to his right mind. But how is Jesus Christ looked upon by men when they are in this miserable state? Just as he was regarded by the legion of Devils; that is, not as a *Saviour*

viour but as a *Tormentor.* He and his religion are desired to keep at a distance, and not give them any interruption under this misery of sin; for, in their judgment, to be *reformed* and *pacified,* is to be *tormented.*

It is here to be remarked, that this man in the gospel was possessed by a multitude of evil spirits, who call themselves *Legion.* How this could be, it is in vain for us to ask; because, while we are in the body, we know so little about the world of spirits; but, in the moral application, the sense is very plain; for if sin is, in every man, what the Devil is in a dæmoniac; then, it is evident the same man may be under the dominion of a legion of vices and evil passions at once. Pride, covetousness, deceit, lying, lust, drunkenness and blasphemy, are often found in one single person. Such is the case of miserable man! but, lost as he may seem to be, the Saviour can find him, and cast out all that sin which has got the dominion over him; as he sent out this *Legion* of spirits into the herd of swine.

When the Devil leaves a man, he does not fall into idleness; he goes upon some other mischief as fast as he can, that no time may be lost. So, the evil spirits being cast out of this Gadarene, entered into a herd of swine, and drove them

them all headlong down a steep place into the sea, where they were drowned. Here observe, that the Devil, with all his malice, can do nothing against man or beast but by permission of God: he has no power over a poor worthless swine, that wallows in the mire, till he obtains leave to exercise it. The Legion, therefore, knowing what terms they were upon, apply to Jesus for this permission; *Send us*, said they, *into the swine that we may enter into them; and forthwith Jesus gave them leave.* Hence we gather, that, in the like case, the like leave will be granted. Suffer us, said they, to enter, not into *oxen*, not into *sheep*, not into sober and orderly cattle, but into the greedy, filthy, rebellious *swine*. There the Devils had permission to *work*, as they are said still to do, *in the children of disobedience.* Who are the people that are delivered up by the best judgment of God to the will of the Devil? Who, but the unclean and abominable; which resemble swine in their lives and manners? The glutton, the drunkard, the adulterer, the fornicator, the idle and the disobedient, open a way for the devil to enter in, and possess them with other evil passions of wrath, malice, revenge, covetousness, which bring them under the severity of the laws, and so they go head-long

to destruction. With good men, who lead sober and temperate lives, like the labouring ox or the innocent sheep, you find meekness, quietness, and charity; and where will you find wrath, and revenge, and clamour, and evil speaking, so much as with those who live in habitual intemperance? For bodily excess produces turbulence and furiousness of mind. When an evil spirit was to be cast out, and the disciples of Christ had failed in it, he told them, *that kind went not forth*, which means, that evil spirits of that sort could not be cast out, *but by prayer and fasting*. Therefore if prayer and fasting send away evil spirits, indevotion and intemperance will let them in. Look well then to yourselves: the devil desires nothing so much as to destroy you, and is ever upon the watch; he will miss no opportunity: as soon as he sees you live like a swine, he will ask leave to take possession of you, and that leave will not be refused. And what will he do with you? he will lead you farther off from God: he will hurry you away from the sins of the body into blindness of heart, so that you shall not foresee the necessary consequences of your own evil actions: he will bring you nearer and nearer to some steep place; and when you are at it, down you must go without stopping:

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it is an headlong course, and the sea of perdition is at the bottom. How careful ought we then to be in guarding against the beginnings of sin! Who knows how far he shall go, when he begins with the indulgence of any *one* sinful lust? how many have began with keeping ill company; and ended with self-murder, or the gallows? *You* intend no more than the *beginning*; but the devil intends the *utmost* mischief that sin can do to you. He works with a view to that *end*, which you do not see: and he will take care, that you shall not see it, till it cannot be avoided; as, when the swine had started from the top of the precipice, they could not stop till they ran into the sea which lay at the bottom:

Now when all these things were done, the keepers of the swine flee to the city, and relate every thing as it had happened: at the hearing of which, the people *went out to see what it was that was done.* Here they find the man that was possessed with the Devil, *sitting and clothed, and in his right mind.* He that was used to run raving about, was now *sitting* calm and quiet: he that had torn his clothes off his back, and was past all sense of shame, was now clothed and decent in his appearance: he that had been out of his wits, and spake and cried

cried as Devils gave him utterance, was now in his *right mind*, and could give a rational account of all that had happened to him. What a wonderful change is here! How gracious is the power that can produce such a blessed transformation! that can raise up a child of God out of a child of wrath, and an instrument of the devil! How will the people of the city rejoice when they see this! will they not wish that such a guest would remain with them for ever, to relieve their sicknesses and sins? So you would think; but, alas, when you come to know a little better what the humour of this world is, and what low motives men are governed by, you will find the contrary: you will discover, to your surprise and sorrow, that men will put away from them all the blessings of salvation, for the sordid ends and interests of this world. So did these Gadarenes. Instead of being delighted and cheared with this wonderful act of divine grace, in the restoration of their miserable neighbour, they were uneasy and affrighted at it. Instead of wishing for more good of the kind, these stupid people considered nothing but the hogs which they had lost, and were afraid the Saviour of the world should do them some more mischief. Good God! what infatuation

fatuation is this! But it does not end here: these are not the only people, in whom this folly is found; the world is full of such Gadarenes: you find them every where: men, who pray Jesus Christ to depart out of their coasts, for fear he should send away their vile lusts and passions to the devil. It appears incredible, that any people should be so wicked and so false to themselves as to prefer the possession of their swine to the company of Jesus Christ. What! is our property in a filthy beast more desireable than the presence of the son of God; who can deliver us from our passions, and restore us to our senses? It certainly is so, to all those who make this world their object; present pleasure or present profit doth so blind their eyes, that they can see nothing wonderful in the power of Christ, nor feel any desire that it should be exercised for their own salvation: they are rather busy in calculating, how much they shall be likely to *lose* if he comes against them. One says within himself, I must part with what I have gotten by fraud and injustice; he will order me to refund and make restitution; or to give of what I have to the poor, or to the church. Another reckons I shall be obliged to give up my adultery; he will cast that devil out as soon as he comes to me. Another says,

I must

I must eat and drink less, and I will not deny myself for any body; I see no occasion for it; and if that be his doctrine, I had rather be without him than with him. I came into the world to enjoy myself as much as I can; and I will continue so to do, as long as my vessels will hold together. The woman of the world says, I must part with my vanity; and instead of doing as every body does (whom one *knows*) I must do as nobody does; and be thought ridiculous and hypocritical; in short, I had rather be under the devil and in the fashion, than under Jesus Christ and out of it. People do not talk aloud in this manner, as I do for them; few are so shameless as to do that; but thus they reason in their hearts; and thus they have determined, as you may see by their lives.

Too many reservations in behalf of self-indulgence are found in many, who are otherwise well disposed. Let every one make the experiment upon himself, and ask impartially—did I never wish, that Christian godliness with all its restraints might *depart out of my coasts*, for the sake of preserving some favourite lust: or indulging some favourite passion? Did I never, in my thoughts, take part against the authority of God, and wish there was no such thing, for love to some particular sin? Whoever discovers

any such reasonings, and such inclinations within him, may wonder at the case of the senseless Gadarenes; but he will find their history too probable, from what passes in his own mind. But to proceed:

Every good man, who has the glory of God and the interest of his religion at heart, may learn from this example of Jesus Christ, what he himself is to expect under the like circumstance. The servant is not above his Lord. If the Gadarenes out of respect to their swine, desired *Him* to depart out of their coasts; they that are Gadarenes in their hearts will shew as little regard to his ministers. Instead of being held in greater esteem for the good they do, or wish to do; their company will be less desireable on that very account. In every place there are those, who, for some swinish reason or other, will think they have an interest against a preacher of the Gospel, if he is active in his ministry, and speaks the truth, and exercises what power he has, for the salvation of men.

But it is time now to have done with these bad people; as I hope there are not many such among those I am speaking to; so, let us proceed to a more pleasant and profitable part of our subject.

When Jesus had heard the request of these Gada-

Gadarenes, he made no remarks upon it, but took them at their word, and left them. The wretched *Pharaoh*, to his own loss, commanded *Moses to see his face no more*; and Moses left him with these words, "thou hast spoken well, "I will see thy face again no more." And when Moses was gone, grace and mercy went with him: Pharaoh's opportunity was lost; and his destruction soon followed: for, it is just, that they who put away salvation from themselves, with contempt towards those who offer it, should perish in the hardness of their own hearts. What became of these Gadarenes afterwards, we do not read: but surely, no good could possibly happen to those, who through favour to an *herd of swine* judged themselves *unworthy of everlasting life.* To this judgment of their own our Saviour left them, and went into a ship. But he that had been possessed with the Devil, and was now well, prayed him that he might be with him. He was delighted with the company of his deliverer, and wished never to leave him any more. He had tasted and found that the Lord was gracious. He compared his past miserable condition, with the light and comfort to which he was now restored; and rightly judged, that his future health and happiness must depend upon his

following and cleaving to the person of his spiritual physician. We may suppose the man would address him in some such words as these: "Lord, how shall I depart from thee, without "whom I am nothing? I was in blindness and "madness; I was in restlessness and misery, and "thou hast restored me to peace and comfort; "I was the bond-slave of Satan, and thou hast "brought me to the liberty of the sons of God: "let me never leave thee nor forsake thee: now "I have recovered the use of my senses, and "can understand thy teaching, let me from "henceforth sit at thy feet and hear thy word."

And will not this be the case with all those, on whom the power of Jesus Christ hath taken effect? Will they not desire still to follow him, and be with him? And with him they may be, as truly as that man could be with him while he was conversant upon earth. For he hath promised to be *with us alway even unto the end of the world:* if so; if he is still with us, it follows, that we may be with him. Should we ask, how this may be; the answer is plain; the promise of Christ was made to his disciples; that is, to his Church: they therefore, who would find him, must seek him in his Church; where his word is preached, and his sacraments are administered. He is with us by his spirit; according

according to his promise; *I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you.* If any one delights in the study of the Gospel; is attentive to public worship; is constant at the communion; regular in his private devotions; and in charity with his neighbours; that man is undoubtedly in the company of Jesus Christ every day of his life; and he may use those words of the Apostle; *who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword* ?* Distress and persecution were from the beginning the lot of those who chose to be with Jesus Christ; and, in some degree, it must be so now; and will be, to the end of the world; but they who are sensible of what they have received from him, will not be *separated from him* for any of these considerations. In all these things, they will be *more than conquerors through him that loved them.*

So far this man in the gospel is a lesson to us; that we should find a delight in the society of our blessed Redeemer, and wish to be ever with him. Gratitude is a pleasing service, and devout meditation may captivate our minds, so as to make us forget what we owe to the public.

* Rom. viii. 35.

So our Saviour himself was pleased to think, upon this occasion; therefore he did not suffer the man whom he had restored to remain in his company, but gave him a charge, to employ himself in another manner; *go home*, said he, *to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.* In this, he teaches us what we also are to do; who, in all the good that happens to us, are to be mindful of others, as well as of ourselves. A person cured of some grievous distemper, by some powerful medicine, gives notice to the public, that others, under the same malady, may find the same relief. The man whom Jesus had cured was ordered to take this course: *he published in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him; and all men did marvel.* He told his neighbours, what he *had* been, and what he *now* was, by the divine blessing. All the circumstances of the Legion of Devils, and the possession and destruction of the herd of swine, were undoubtedly recounted by him to the astonishment of the hearers: and for what end? Not to gratify the ambition of his deliverer, but that others might be encouraged to come to him; for he who had saved this one sinner, is the Saviour of all mankind.

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And now, my brethren, you see your own duty, and the design of this whole narrative. It is related in the gospel, for the same reason as it was published in Decapolis; that all sinners may know *where to go* for that saving health, which is to restore their minds to quietness and comfort. For all the diseases of the spirit, which are a thousand times worse than the troubles of the world, or the distempers of the body, there is no cure, but from him who was manifested to destroy the works of the Devil; whose worst work is the deprivation of the human mind by the power of indwelling sin, which drives men to all those extravagancies which render this world such a miserable place as we find it. The passions of men are like storms and tempests, which disturb the elements, destroy the fruits of the earth, and send the poor distressed mariner to the bottom of the sea. Such are the effects of those vices, which the evil spirit infuses into the hearts of men; their lives are rendered vain and miserable, and their souls are shipwrecked.

Compare the *two states* of the man, whose case we have been considering: think what he was, when he was wandering among the tombs and mountains; and afterwards, when he was sitting quiet in his right mind with Jesus Christ.

Compare these together, and consider, *which* you would chuse; for you have the one or the other, as you think proper. The same difference, which you see in this man, is to be found in different people at this day: and which do you think are the happier? A company of drunkards and profligates, who are raving and swearing, and quarrelling and blaspheming over their liquor; or a society of Christians, singing Psalms and hearing the word of God? The former sort can never expect their happiness from such a way of life, till the Devil is in them; and when he has got possession of them, nothing is to be wondered at. But the sober and the godly have the advantage of them every way, both in this world and the world to come: for *here*, they are *with* Jesus Christ and in their *right mind;* and when the others shall exchange their false mirth (which is now no better than madness) for weeping and wailing and gnashing of the teeth; when *they* shall lose their lusts and their Saviour besides, who will not remain *in their coasts;* they who have been cured of their sins and miseries in this mortal state, shall no more be separated from him; they shall be *ever with the Lord;* publishing his praises to saints and angels, in such terms as the holy spirit hath already suggested to us

—*O give*

—*O give thanks unto the Lord for he is gracious, and his mercy endureth for ever:* let them give *thanks whom the Lord hath redeemed, and delivered from the hand of the enemy.* Psalm. cvii. 1, 2.

SERMON VI.

THE SAME NIGHT PETER WAS SLEEPING BETWEEN TWO SOLDIERS, BOUND WITH TWO CHAINS; AND THE KEEPERS BEFORE THE DOOR KEPT THE PRISON.

AND BEHOLD, THE ANGEL OF THE LORD CAME UPON HIM, AND A LIGHT SHINED IN THE PRISON; AND HE SMOTE PETER ON THE SIDE, AND RAISED HIM UP, SAYING, ARISE UP QUICKLY. AND HIS CHAINS FELL OFF FROM HIS HANDS. ACTS xii. 6, 7.

THE mind of man is formed for thought and meditation; and the pleasure of the understanding, where it has proper matter to exercise and amuse it, is far preferable to the indulgence of the passions. Happy should we be, if we could always think so!

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The best matter in the world for meditation is that of the holy scripture: first, because it is selected for us by the wisdom that made the world. The thoughts which men suggest to us in their conversation or their writings, have too frequently their beginning and their ending in this world; and are either imaginary and false, or earthly and unprofitable: and the meditation arising from such matter, how finely and elegantly soever it may be, will at last be slender and useless as the web which the spider draws from its own bowels. Secondly, because the matter of the scripture not only affords a more rational amusement to the mind in this life, but is always of service to help it forward to the enjoyment of a better. It nourishes the spirit, while it engages the imagination. The body, be it never so well supported, must sink and perish at last; but the soul that is *nourished up in the words of faith, and of good doctrine*, shall never die.

Among the great variety of subjects treated of in the scripture, none are more profitable than the *miracles* it has recorded; which generally are capable of a two-fold application. They serve as so many evident acts of a divine power, to confirm some doctrines revealed to

us from heaven: and they are likewise in themselves so many contrivances of divine wisdom, to figure out and represent to us the doctrines they are intended to establish. A miracle is a seal of some divine truth; but if the seal bears the image and superscription of the truth, it will have a double value.

This is generally true of the miracles in the Old Testament; but of those of the new in a more particular manner; which after they have confirmed the words of the gospel, preach the *sense* of it over again to us, as *signs* or *figures* of it. You will understand what I mean from an example or two. Our blessed Saviour, as a proof of his divine mission, cleansed a leper; not merely for the healing of the body, which was but a temporary consideration; but to shew, by the choice of the miracle, that it was he who should take away the sin of the world, and cleanse the soul from so loathsome and infectious a distemper: for sin, like the leprosy, is hereditary to man. When he opened the eyes of a blind man, he added to the miracle this interpretation, to shew the meaning of it—*I am the light of the world*—As if he had said, I who now give sight to the eyes of the body, do this to signify, that I myself am the true light to

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the eyes of the understanding: as the eyes that were blind are restored to sight, so shall the mind that is dark and ignorant be made *wise to salvation*, and recover the use of those faculties, which sin had extinguished: *he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*

Thus in like manner, when he set open the doors of a prison by the ministry of an angel, which is the miracle related in the text, what did he, but shadow out to us thereby that great and glorious effect of his own incarnation upon all believers, that *eternal redemption*, which the prophet long ago described as *an opening of the prison to them that are bound?* Isa. lxi. 1.

But before I proceed to particulars, I must take the liberty which St. *Paul* took with King *Agrippa:* he put this question to him, "King "Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?" I must put a like question to those that hear me, and say, believest thou that a state of *sin* is a state of *imprisonment*; and that the *service of God*, to which the gospel hath called thee, is *perfect freedom?* If not, all the moral reflections I can suggest to you upon this deliverance of St. *Peter* out of prison, will make but little impression, and be very imperfectly understood. I will therefore presume, as the Apostle did,

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and answer the question for myself—" *I know* " *that thou believest:*" and may God give you his grace, that what I am now going to offer upon the *mystery of God manifest in the flesh to destroy the works of* the Devil, may fall into the ground of an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit an hundred fold. With this desire I shall endeavour to shew, that the miraculous deliverance of St. Peter out of prison, is not a matter *of private interpretation*, which looks no further than to the apostle himself; but is intended for publick use; holding forth to the Church, and to every individual member of it, an instructive pattern of his own natural bondage, and his miraculous redemption out of it.

The condition of an unenlightened unconverted sinner was never painted in more lively colours, than in the first verse of the text, which describes the situation of the apostle. " The " same *night* Peter was *sleeping* between two " soldiers, bound with *two chains*, and the " keepers before the door *kept the prison.*" You observe, first, that all this happened in the *night:* secondly, that Peter was *sleeping:* thirdly, that he was *bound*, and that with *two chains*; and fourthly, that there were *keepers* before the door who *kept the prison.* Every word

word of which is verified in that man, who is not yet brought to the gospel of the grace of God. For first, it is night with him. His mind is without the knowledge of God, and of immortality; and Nature can give him no information about either of them: so that he may be truly said to *sit in darkness*, even the worst of all darkness, which is that of the understanding. The apostle therefore, speaking to enlightened Christians, reminds them of that state, *out of which* they had been called: "Ye "brethren, says he, are not in darkness, that "that day should overtake you as a thief (in "the night): ye are all the children of *light*, "and the children of *the day*: we are not "of the *night nor of darkness*."

As the night is a time of darkness, it is also a time of sleep: "Peter was sleeping." When man is in the darkness of nature, he is like a person in a deep sleep; insensible of every thing real that is round about him, and, under the delusion of a dream, he sees nothing of his true situation, but is amused with all those shadows, which variously please and torment the short miserable lives of men. "Let us not "*sleep*, saith St. Paul, as do others." We Christians are awake; the world is asleep, and lies dreaming of happiness under all the real circum-

circumstances of misery. For they are not only asleep, they are under the custody of him that hath the power of death, and cannot rise up if they would. They are under close confinement in the worst of prisons, and are *bound with two chains*, the one of *sin*, the other of *death*, neither of which can be broken by the strength of man; and as for any succour, it is kept at a distance, by a guard of *keepers* before the prison door: there sits the *strong man armed*, to watch his captives, and prevent their rescue or their escape. There they must remain, *fast bound in misery and iron, till a stronger than he comes upon him*, takes from him his armour wherein he trusteth, and sets his prisoners at liberty.

Now we have seen the misery of man, we are next to behold the wonderful work of his deliverance by the manifestation of his Redeemer: for it follows in the text—*and behold the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison.* The first appearance of our great Deliverer was attended with the same circumstance. When the glad tidings of his birth were revealed to the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem, *the glory of* the Lord shone round about them. At this dark season of the year, he left the throne of his glory, and

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for us men and for our salvation, entered into the dungeon of this sinful world, where his first act was to give *light* to it: from the hour of his birth, a light began to shine in this prison. A star, appearing in the East, pointed him out as the *light* that was to *lighten the Gentiles*, and to be the *Glory of his people Israel.* Soon after his conception of the Blessed Virgin, the tongue of Zachary was loosed, to declare, that through the tender mercy of our God, the *Day spring from on high* had *visited us*, to give *light to them that sat in darkness*; which words do very exactly describe the posture and circumstances of men in a prison. Worse than the midnight-darkness of a dungeon, was the blindness of the Jews, and the ignorance of the heathens. According to the strictest sense of these words of the prophet, *darkness had covered the earth, and gross darkness the people, when the Lord arose, and his glory was seen upon them.* Under the ministry of Christ himself, the Jews received the light of knowledge; and by the preaching of his apostles, this light of instruction was spread abroad from Mount Sion into all the quarters of the earth; till the light of the gospel became as universal as the light of the sun, which visits every side of the globe, and *nothing is hid from the heat thereof.*

The consequence of this *light*, is *liberty*; and thus it follows in the history of our apostle's deliverance: "he *smote* Peter on the *side*, and "raised him up, saying, *arise up quickly*." Thus must every believer be smitten, before the great work of his redemption can succeed. The gospel doth not address itself to the head and to the wit: it strikes at the heart and the affections. If the soul is insensible of the stroke, and will not be convinced of its misery, the wretched prisoner *sleeps on and takes his rest:* he is either in love with the sordid life of a dungeon, or lies dreaming that he is in a palace. The heavenly light shines round about him; but his eyes are not open to make any use of it: he *loves his darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil.* Oh, what a heart must that be, which neither feels the stroke, nor hears the voice of the heavenly messenger, who is sent for its deliverance! But happy is the broken and the contrite heart, which feels its own misery, and answers to the call of heaven: blessed are the eyes, which awake, to see and rejoice in the glory of that light, which truth diffuses round about them! The prisoner, who has this sense of things, rises and stands upright, as Peter did when the Angel had smote him: he hears the voice which speaketh to him by

by the prophet, *awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.* Blessed and holy is he that hath part in this first resurrection from sin to grace: over him the second death shall have no power.

The words which the Angel used to St. Peter, will admit of an useful application to us all: "arise up quickly:" for if our salvation is *an escape,* no time is to be lost: life and death may depend upon the present moment; and he who hears not the first call, may hear the last trumpet as the second, when the hour of deliverance, and the day of grace, is over. If reformation is put off to a *convenient season,* that season, as we are taught by woeful experience, never comes. And where must the blame be laid? God is not obliged to wait the idle man's leisure: he will be justified, and the sinner will be lost. If Peter had desired the Angel to wait while his sleep was out, he had been left to the consequences of his imprisonment; and would soon have been carried out to gratify the malicious Jews with the spectacle of his execution. You think he would have acted like a madman, if he had neglected to rise up and follow the Angel immediately: and do not you think, that any man would be mad in the like circumstances? He would certainly: but thou, who-

soever thou art, that delayest to obey the call of God's messenger, and forsake thy sins, and avoid the consequences of them, while thou mayest, thou art that man. Is eternal damnation so light a matter, that our escape from it must be made a work of convenience? Look at the example of our Apostle: he stood not arguing with the Angel about a proper season, though it were then midnight, but complied immediately. A circumstance meets us here, which merits a particular attention. The Angel bids him rise up: but to what purpose, when two heavy chains fastened him down to the floor? and what would the soldiers say, who lay by the side of him? yet he made no difficulty; God never commands any thing that will prove to be impossible: so he rose up in faith, and in the attempt *the chains* that bowed him down *fell off from his hands*. And though you, in your own case, may think the power of sin which holds you down is so strong as to render all your struggles ineffectual, yet, you are to remember, that all things are possible with God: and that it is not your own strength, but a divine miracle that must save you at last. Fear not then the companions that lie by the side of you, whether they are evil men or evil spirits, whose office it is to keep you where you are;

are, and confine you to your bondage: God can defend you against their attempts: the light which comes from heaven to guide you may bring upon them either terror or stupefaction, so that they shall become like dead men, and make no resistance. Neither look with despair upon your chains, nor pretend to say you cannot help your sins: hath he not said, *my grace is sufficient for thee?* His power, and the directions he hath given thee in his word, are to accomplish this great work, for which all the abilities of man are insufficient. It is required of the captive sinner, only that he should be willing and try to raise himself up: strength will come to him in the attempt, and the power of the adversary will fail; as the fetters and chains, which confined the Apostle, fell away to the ground when he obeyed the voice of the Angel.

This case throws so much light on a theological question of great importance, that I shall take a little time to insist farther upon it, with your leave. It shews us, how the *endeavours of man* are consistent with the help and *grace of God*; and so confutes, as well the error of those who exclude the free will of man, as of others who reject the grace of God, because they think it would make human reason unne-

cessary. But this is not the case: for, doubtless, Peter might have refused to obey the summons of the Angel, if his *reason* had been *weak* enough: but he attempted to rise, and found himself released. We have other cases in the scripture of the same kind. When Peter healed a cripple at the gate of the temple, he bid him *stand up upon his feet:* but how should he do so, when he had no ability? his feet and ancle bones were doubled under him, and become useless: yet he believed, endeavoured, and stood upright. A man with a *withered hand* presented himself to Christ: he bid him *stretch it out:* but how could that be? might he not have said, "Lord, thou art an hard man, to "command me thus to stretch out an arm, of "which, as thou seest, I have lost the use." However, he had the heart to try; and in the trial his arm become whole as the other. The moral therefore is this; that you are not to be so foolish as to oppose the work of your own deliverance: only be willing to be saved; put yourself into action; try to get up; and the power of God will be present to help you through. With this the doctrine of the scripture agrees, as well in its precepts as its miracles; *work* out your *own* salvation—For *it is God* that *worketh in you* both to will and to do

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of his good pleasure. Work for yourselves; but then remember, that your labour is not in vain, because it is God that worketh with you. I thought it proper to take this opportunity of illustrating the concurrence of divine grace with human endeavours; a very weighty and (as some have made it) a difficult subject. How far the act of man proceeds, and where the power of God comes in, we cannot exactly determine; nor is there any occasion; the fact is as I have set it before you; and one fact gives more light than all the metaphysical disquisitions in the world.

But to return to the case of St. Peter; after whose example, the soul being set at liberty, has recovered the use of its faculties, which *Satan* had *bound* with the *bond of iniquity*. God having begun the good work, the convert must proceed to do something for himself, under the direction of his guide, who will not yet forsake him. If we go on with the account of St. Peter's deliverance, we read in the next place, that "*the Angel said unto him, gird thyself,* "*and bind on thy sandals: and so he did: and* "*he saith unto him, cast thy garment about thee* "*and follow me.*" The same advice is given to us, when we are brought from darkness into light. We are commanded to have *our loins*

girt about with truth; to be right and ready in our faith; taking care that no folds and impediments of error hang loose about the feet to retard our progress, and become an occasion of falling. Whatever may hinder our steps is to be gathered out of the way, and the girdle of *truth* is to be put on. This done, we are to *bind on our sandals*; that is, we are to be *shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace*; without which preparation, the Christian can no more pursue his way in peace and safety through the trials of the world, than a poor traveller can walk with naked feet over rough stones and burning sands without being hurt. The man of the world is galled by every trifling accident; against which the peaceable spirit of the Gospel would be a sure defence. It is called the *Gospel of Peace*, not only as it contains the glad tidings of peace between heaven and earth; but likewise as it is a rule of peace to us in our conversation with the world; and oh, *how beautiful are the feet* that have put it on and wear it! The loins being girded about, and the feet shod, we are commanded *to cast our garment about us*; to *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*, and become spiritual men, clothed with his righteousness, whereby our sins are covered, and we are *accepted in the beloved.*

This

This is that *best robe*, which the father of mercy commanded his servants to bring forth, and put upon his returning prodigal. It is given to us in our baptism; it is preserved to us by a faithful participation of the Lord's supper; and it must be our care to keep it *without spot.*

When Peter had complied with the instructions of the Angel, he was bid to *follow him*; and when we are thus far prepared, it remains that we follow our deliverer, who is also our guide, in life and in death, and will conduct us from this place of our confinement to the city of the heavenly Jerusalem. In all our steps, we are to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who though he is gone before us, is still with us, to keep us in the way, and defend us from all the dangers of it.

Such is the deliverance, and so great is the mercy of God to every truly awakened sinner. He is *brought from prison and from judgment*; and who is able to declare the wonders of this his regeneration? The shadow and image of this great deliverance (for that of St. Peter was no more) confounded and dazzled the mind of the Apostle, so that he was insensible of the reality of that which had happened to him—*He went out and followed him, and wist not that it was true which was done by the Angel, but*

but thought he saw a vision. And if we look upon the wonders of our redemption, and upon the character of our redeemer who is the glorious instrument of it, it seems incredible; the sense of mortal man is overpowered with the thought. *When the Lord thus turneth again the captivity of Sion, then are we like unto them that dream.* Some think the matter too wonderful to be true, and never recover of their doubts all the days of their life; but the believer, however transported for a time, will be assured of the reality of his deliverance, when other circumstances fall in to confirm it and shew him the truth of it. It is not probable, that the same transport of mind which befell St. Peter, shall for a while oppress our senses, when the light of the last day shall shine upon us, and the Angel of the Lord shall take us by the hand to lead us forth from the confinement of the grave, to join the congregation of the faithful?

We come now to the concluding circumstances of this instructive miracle. "When they "were past the first and the second ward, "they came unto the iron gate that leadeth "unto the city, which opened to them of its "own accord; and they went out and passed "on through one street, and forthwith the "Angel departed from him." This part of the example

example is also to be fulfilled in us; the converted sinner must pass by the keepers of the prison. There is a *first* and a *second ward*, the world and the flesh, each of whom will think it their interest to interrupt him in his progress; but if he keeps close to his guide, who has overcome the world, and suffered in the flesh, he will be able to perfect his escape, till he comes at last to the *iron gate* of death and the grave, that *leadeth to the city* of the *new* Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all, and passes through it to a joyful resurrection. When our heavenly guide presents himself, it *opens of its own accord*, and leaves the way clear for him to bring out his *prisoners of hope*. When he had *overcome the sharpness of death, he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers;* and the gates of hell have no longer any power to confine them. Here then is the consolation we are to draw from this scripture; that a sure and certain hope is given to us, that though we are to *walk through the valley and the shadow of death*, we need *fear no evil:* the Angel of the Lord is with us as a guide, and his power is present to perfect the deliverance he hath now began in us. The whole work of the Gospel is here represented to us under a figure, as an

opening

opening of the prison to them that are bound; and our commission, like that of our Lord himself, is to preach *liberty to the captives*, and to proclaim *the acceptable year of the Lord;* that æra of grace, pardon, and deliverance, which began with the nativity of Christ, and will last till the consummation.

My brethren, it is of God's infinite mercy, that when I stand here, I have such *glad tidings* to deliver to you. What will be said for you, if you do not hear them, and make your advantage of them? If the *light* should *shine* upon you, and your *darkness* should not *comprehend* it? If you should wear your *chains*, and be contented with them, when you may enjoy the glorious *liberty of the sons of God?* If the iron gate should be shut upon you, and barred for ever against you, when the Angel of the Lord has offered to let you out, that you may escape, and *flee from the wrath to come?* As it would have gratified the malice of the Jews, to have seen the blessed Apostle dragging his chains, and led out to execution; so will the evil spirits rejoice against you, when you are carried forth to punishment in the day of vengeance: they will mock at that indolence, that fatal drowsiness and stupidity, which lost for ever the opportunity of salvation.

The

The practical duty which we are to infer from all that has been said, is that kind of charity, which exercises itself in *delivering* others, either from sin or from sorrow. The question will be put to us, whether we have visited those that were in bondage, as the day spring from on high hath visited us? He who has no compassion upon his poor brother, that is bound, either by sickness, poverty, debt, sorrow, or sin, is insensible of the blessings of his own redemption: into his prison the light hath not yet shined, but *he is in darkness even until now.* To enlighten the ignorant, to raise up the afflicted, to restore the guilty to pardon, to awaken the imprisoned soul, and strike it with a sense of its own misery, and of God's mercy; these are the proper works of the children of light. If we do these things to others, then we shew all men that we believe God has done the same for us; and this is the best security we can find in the great day of inquisition and retribution. And why doth God require these things of us? Not for his sake, but our own: not that we may repay him for what he has done, but that we may qualify ourselves for the hearing of that blessed sentence, worth ten thousand worlds—Well done—enter thou into the joy of

of thy Lord: which, may he grant, for the sake of Jesus Christ, who was manifested to us Gentiles, that we should no longer sit in darkness, but have the light of life.

SERMON

SERMON VII.

AND WHEN IT WAS DETERMINED THAT WE SHOULD SAIL INTO ITALY, THEY DELIVERED PAUL AND CERTAIN OTHER PRISONERS UNTO ONE NAMED JULIUS, A CENTURION OF AUGUSTUS' BAND. ACTS XXVII. I.

ALL the adventures of St. Paul are worth the consideration of a devout reader of the scripture; but few parts of his history are more remarkable than this of his voyage and shipwreck in his passage to Rome. Several articles of that narrative, which is given us in the chapter from whence the text is taken, are so interesting, that I shall select them in the following discourse, and add as I go along such remarks as shall naturally arise from them. As to any critical

cal consideration of the geographical part of this narrative, I have no concern with it, my design being rather of a moral nature. I shall not dispute about the true direction of the wind called *Euroclydon*; neither shall I enquire whether the island called *Melita* was that which is now called *Malta*, near to *Sicily*, or another of the like name among the islands of the *Archipelago*. I shall neglect all such critical disquisitions for the present, and confine myself to such observations, as may teach us to understand in a better manner the goodness of God and the perverseness of man; both of which were signally displayed on this occasion.

The particulars I mean to extract and propose to your meditation are these following:

1. I shall consider the situation and circumstances of the Apostle sailing a prisoner to Rome.

2. The error of Julius the centurion in not taking the Apostle's judgment concerning the voyage.

3. The attempt of the shipmen to flee out of the ship, and leave her in a helpless condition.

4. The comfort, encouragement and safety derived to the whole company from the presence of St. Paul.

5. The

5. The necessity they were under of throwing their provisions into the sea, to lighten the ship.

6. And lastly, the insensibility and ingratitude of the soldiers, who gave counsel to kill the prisoners, amongst whom the blessed Apostle himself, who under God was the Saviour of them all, must have fallen a sacrifice.

Of these things, all of which are of important consideration, the first that offers itself is the situation of St. Paul himself, sailing as a prisoner to Rome.

He is brought into this, as into all his other perils, by his fidelity to God and his services to the world as a minister of the Gospel. The malicious Jews raised a clamour against him, and falsely accused him to the Roman Governor, as a mover of sedition; with full purpose to take away his life; so that he was constrained to appeal to the authority of Cæsar for his own preservation; in consequence of which, he embarked on shipboard with other prisoners to take his trial at Rome.

When the servants of God are persecuted, and obliged to fly from reproach and treachery and cruelty, for their own security; we may be tempted to imagine, that God has forgotten them, and left them to the malice of their adversaries;

versaries: whereas he is then most mindful of them. They are, as the Apostle himself speaks, *persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed:* and he warns the Christians of *Thessalonica*, not to be *moved* or disturbed in their profession *by these afflictions*; for *yourselves know*, saith he, that *we are appointed thereunto.* God is often nearest to his saints when he seems farthest off. To us indeed, short-sighted as we are, it is more easy to discover and acknowledge his attention, when we are sensible of his bounty. We see and adore the hand of the Creator, in the clearness of the fountain, the brightness of the sunshine, and the calmness of the ocean; but his power, as a Saviour, is manifested in the storms and troubles of life. Therefore he brings his servants into distress, that he may make his power known by bringing them out of it; with this farther advantage to themselves, that they are exercised and improved by the trial of their faith.

It is for this end that we see the life of the great Apostle diversified with such contrary visitations. We see him honoured beyond all other men by a miraculous call to the ministry, yet under continual troubles and perils, for acting in his proper character: while he is favoured

voured with more abundant revelations, he is vexed and humbled with a *thorn in the flesh*: he pleads with all the dignity and power of an orator before kings and rulers, while he is fettered as a malefactor for the hope of Israel: he is admired, and *worshipped as a God in the likeness of a man*, at *Lystra*, and soon afterwards stoned by the same people, and dragged out of the city for dead.

On the occasion mentioned in the text, we see him on shipboard, in the company of soldiers and sailors, whose conversation is generally of the coarsest sort, and upon the lowest subjects; very unsuitable to the dignity and purity of an Apostle. But in this situation, it pleases God to distinguish and exalt him, as a preacher and a deliverer. The ship that carries him becomes like the ark of Noah; he himself is like that second farther of mankind, and all the souls embarked with him, whatever their character may be, are preserved for his sake.

But let us ask once more, how it comes to pass, that we find this holy man exercised with so many perils by sea and by land? The answer is plain; the Lord had said of him, at the time of his miraculous conversion; *I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my*

name's sake. He was the vessel chosen to bear the name of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. Next to him who came into the world, to be the *light of the Gentiles,* he had the greatest office that ever man was entrusted with; he was made the *Apostle of the Gentiles:* he was preferred above all, and therefore he was to suffer more than all. The heroes of this world are distinguished by great actions, but the servants of God by great sufferings; and it is a better evidence, because it is a much harder trial, of our faith, to suffer patiently, than to act valiantly. A man may act for his own glory, and it is surprising to see how much is done, and spoken, and written, in the world, on this principle: but if he suffers in a cause which the world opposes, it is for the glory of God: he who was to be the Saviour and pattern of all mankind, was therefore made *perfect through sufferings.* St. Paul is now before us, in his progress to perfection, through the like way of patient suffering for the truth's sake. He has suffered by land among Jews, heathens, and false brethren; and now he is joined with shipmen and soldiers, to go through all the trials and dangers to which men are exposed, who *go down to the sea in ships,* and suffer shipwreck on that dreadful element.

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If we follow him with our observations on this occasion, the first remarkable thing that offers itself is the error of *Julius* the centurion, who refused to take the Apostle's judgment concerning the voyage. "When much time "was spent, and when sailing was now dan- "gerous, because the fast was already past, "Paul admonished them, and said unto them, "Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with "much hurt and much damage, not only of "the lading and ship, but also of our lives. "Nevertheless the centurion believed the mas- "ter and the owner of the ship, more than those "things which were spoken by Paul." The Apostle argues, first from natural reasons and common experience: their progress had been so slow, that much time was lost, and they were now fallen into a season of the year always dangerous to navigation. But he goes farther; he speaks as one having authority, and descends to the particulars; that the voyage would be fatal to the ship, to the lading, and to their lives. He received his information from the God who made the waters of the sea, and raises them into a storm at his will, and can still them with his word: in this character he gives his advice; but, in the opinion of the hearers, it

has no weight, and the advice of a common navigator, the Master and owner of the ship, is thought to be the wiser. What a misfortune it is, to us, when we prefer the ill-grounded presumptions of man to the warnings of an inspired Apostle; and this when the lives of so many are at stake! He that hears of this may be filled with indignation, and put the question to himself, "had I been in that ship, should I "have rejected the advice of St. Paul, for the "saving of my own life?" Yes, you would; you would have been ignorant of the Gospel, as the people were to whom he spake; you would have seen the great St. Paul under the disadvantages of a prisoner, going to Rome to be tried for his life; perhaps you would have heard the shipmen jesting in their way upon his want of skill, and asking, how a scholar, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, should have any judgment in affairs of navigation? The pride and perverseness of men will always find some plausible reason for despising that counsel which is better than their own; and so did these here: but at last they saw their error when it was too late, and all the horrors of shipwreck were inevitable. We should often succeed much better than we do

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in common things, if we were to consult divine revelation, and take the advice of religious people, instead of trusting to the current policy of the world, or to the voice of an unprincipled majority, who cry out with violence upon very little ground of reason, as these did here. It seemed, the haven they were then at was not commodious to winter in; so they gave up their safety and their lives to avoid a little transient inconvenience. It may be very obvious to ask, who but sailors should give counsel in affairs of navigation? Yet we see by experience, a preacher of the Gospel knew more of the voyage than they did. And thus it happens with us on many occasions: we go to man for advice, and miscarry, when we might have it from God and succeed. I think this observation might be extended very far. We live in an age when human wisdom is magnified far beyond its value; and, in the course of our education, we take its authority implicitly in many things, where the Bible would teach us better, and make us wiser as well as happier. For want of this, we too frequently make shipwreck of faith: and in many instances, reason, learning, true policy and true philosophy, are shipwrecked along with it.

3. It is a common mistake among Christians,

to suppose, that if we are to be saved by the power of God, we are to be saved without the use of natural means: but the contrary is plain, from the judgment the Apostle has given concerning the attempt of the *shipmen to flee out of the ship*, and leave her in a helpless condition; in which case, the lives of the greater part must have been lost. This case is very particular: Paul had been warned by an Angel of God, that there should be *no loss of any man's life;* and he had declared before them all, his own assurance, that it *would be as it was told him.* Yet now he admits it to be possible, that all the rest of the company would be lost, unless the seamen should abide in the ship, to give their help to the last extremity. How is this? Can the promise of God fail? Assuredly not: but this we are to learn, that all his promises are conditional; and that his providence works so *insensibly* for our deliverance, that it is left at last as a question for *faith* to resolve, whether it be providence, or chance, or human skill that has saved us. To suppose the end, is to suppose the means that lead to it: to hope to obtain the end, through a dependence on the divine promises, while we neglect the means which should lead to that end, is the sin of *tempting God;* we tempt him

to

to transgress the rules of his own *wisdom* and *justice* by an undue exercise of his *power*. He promises to work with us, not without us; his help is an encouragement to labour, not an excuse for idleness. He supports and feeds us every day by his power; he *openeth his hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness*; yet he hath pronounced by the mouth of his Apostle, that *if any man will not work, neither shall he eat:* it being intended, that every man shall find his maintenance by the blessing of God upon his own endeavours. So, in the improvement of the mind, his scriptures make us *wise unto salvation*; but not unless we *search* and study them. His holy spirit is promised as a *gift* and an help to all Christians; but not unless they *ask* for it, and prepare themselves for its reception.

The case of these shipmen teaches us, that it is possible for those to be lost, whom God hath promised to save: which doctrine entirely overthrows that false notion of absolute predestination and unconditional decrees, by which many weak minds have been disturbed and led into grievous errors. We therefore conclude with St. Paul, that unless the seamen abide in the ship, and do their ordinary duty on board, and bring in their vessel so near to the shore,

shore, that the people may swim to the land, and seem to save themselves, they cannot be saved of God.

This doctrine will be of great service to us in the conduct of our lives, and contribute to our success in this world, and our salvation in the next, if we make a proper use of it. The promises of God are a security to those who so trust in them, as to work under them; but none at all to those, who shew by their presumption that they are unworthy to obtain them.

4. The comfort, encouragement, and safety derived to this whole company from the presence of St. Paul, is the next thing to be considered. The support which a good man finds for himself in time of distress, extends to those who are near him. After they have been tossed upon the sea for many days in dark tempestuous weather, and expected nothing but inevitable destruction, we see this blessed Apostle infusing confidence and even chearfulness into those, from whom hope itself was departed. The society of a godly man answers the purpose of a new light, when the sun and stars disappear. It is the reason why many sink into despair, and are lost in a troubled sea of sorrow, because they have no friend to administer properly the comforts of religion; none to raise their

their thoughts from the storm that beats upon them to the mercy of that God who stilleth the raging of the sea. See how the Apostle performs this office to those, who had brought him into all this danger, by neglecting his advice. Instead of being offended with their past perverseness, he considers their present distress; he talks to them as if they were his children, and tells them how they are all given to his prayers: he encourages them to eat with thankfulness for their necessary refreshment, and sets them the example in his own person. Here let me observe, for the benefit of those who may be in the like distress, that there is a source of comfort, to which all Christians may have recourse, though they are not blessed with the personal attendance of St. Paul. They have the word of God, which is a sure and faithful attendant upon us in the storms and troubles of life; we may travel with it by land or by water; there we may hear St. Paul speaking to us: there we may have the Psalms of David, accommodated to all the trials, dangers, and afflictions to which a Christian can be exposed. Thus we may sail with St. Paul in our company, and find salvation even in shipwreck.

5. Another circumstance in this voyage, from whence

whence much instruction may be gathered, is this, that when they had taken of their provisions what was necessary to refresh them, after long abstinence, they *lightened the ship*, and cast out the *wheat* into the sea. What will not men do for the saving of their lives? Their bread itself is cast away, when it endangers the life it ought to preserve. Thus ought men to act for the saving of their souls: they should *lay aside every weight*, that may render their escape from sin and sorrow more difficult and hazardous. Nothing should be retained that is inconsistent with their safety. A ship-load of corn is of no value, when men are sinking with the weight of it to the bottom of the sea; and what are all the possessions of this life, but superfluous and destructive, if their tendency is to sink the soul into perdition? When a vessel on a tempestuous sea is about to founder with the weight of the corn she has on board, then it becomes undeniable, that the *life* of the mariners does *not consist in the abundance of the things which they possess*; so far from it, that from hence is their danger; and their abundance is their ruin. Every man who abounds with earthly possessions, in a world of sin and temptation, is in danger of being overset by them. If there were no storms in life,

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no blind appetites to agitate and disorder us, we might then possess much with little danger; a vessel deeply laden may float in a calm sea, and great wealth may consist with the safety of a virtuous person: but when the winds blow, and the waves arise, and there is a bottomless gulph underneath ready to swallow us up, the meanest understanding must be convinced, that abundance is not to be coveted. Suppose a ship to be laden with the treasures of the Indies; suppose her to be painted and gilded, and carved * with all possible elegance; of what use is all this, when she is going to be cast away with her own weight? Then the plain empty vessel, which goes light over the waves, and will convey her passengers safe into the port, is rather to be chosen. Look at the great and the wealthy of this world, and see how often they are tossed about with storm and passion, beyond the lot of other men; the slaves of pride, avarice, and ambition; to the torment of their lives and the hazard of their souls. *They that will be rich,* saith the Apostle, *fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.* This is too often the fatal effect of their abundance. Therefore, let

* Nil pictis timidus navita puppibus
Fidit———

let not the rich, who are in such perils, despise the humble but safer condition of the poor; let not him, that is laden with the possessions of life, boast himself against those why possess little or nothing. We are embarked on a dangerous ocean; and the great question with us all is no other than this, *What shall we do to be saved?* One method is, to *lighten* the vessel, so far as it is necessary; to throw aside every weight that may endanger our salvation; and to cast out even the *wheat* itself into the sea, if it shall please God to make *that* a condition of our deliverance; that so we may escape out of this troublesome world naked and unprovided to the heavenly shore.

6. There is another wonderful passage in this account of St. Paul's shipwreck, the last on which I shall at present offer my observations; this is the counsel of the soldiers to *kill the prisoners*, lest any of them should swim out and escape. As St. Paul himself, being a prisoner, must have fallen a sacrifice in this barbarous execution, we have here a striking instance of the insensibility and brutality of the human mind, when it is neither polished by learning, nor rectified and softened by a knowledge of God. How strange is it, that these soldiers have neither the gratitude nor the compassion

to

to start at the consequence of their bloody proposal; for the sake of St. Paul, to whom they were indebted, not only for admonition and instruction, but also for their lives. His prayers for them all, which, without doubt, his piety would offer daily and hourly in a time of such distress, received this answer by an angel, "Lo, "God hath given thee all them that sail with "thee." As to the soldiers, he had preserved their lives in a more especial manner, by detecting the treachery of the shipmen, and preventing their escape. When men have been fellow-sufferers (and such were all on board this vessel) it naturally endears them to one another. So many days and nights as they had been exercised with such imminent danger, and had despaired of life together, it would rather be expected, that they should congratulate each other on their common deliverance. But there are some hard minds, which are never to be wrought upon: such men would have stained their swords with the blood of their deliverer. After this example, surely no minister of Jesus Christ ought to be surprized, as if some new thing had happened to him, if after all his endeavours he finds some of those among whom he has exercised his ministry repay all his kindness with indifference: nay, if they should even

even oppose him, and hate him, and rise up in arms against him, for an attention to their welfare, and a desire of promoting their reformation and improvement. Vice, wherever it is found, has an interest against the ministers of the gospel; it therefore always was disobedient, contradictory, ungrateful and unmerciful; and such we must expect to find it at this day. What? are we greater than St. Paul? No, we are not to be named with him; our powers in the ministry are nothing when compared with his: it must therefore follow most certainly, that where he could make no impression, we shall make none: the same sort of persons who would have killed him, will neglect and despise us; and such there will be, more or less in all places; persons of no breeding, of no feeling; who having not God himself in all their thoughts, have no regard to any thing, or any person that belongs to him; who, if you were to save their lives, could never be won over to any decency or respect. Men are as different from men, as men from brutes; and the gift of God's grace, or the want of it, makes all the difference.

My dear brethren, when we consider these things, our duty, as deducible from the whole, is, to be thankful to God for the labours, and sufferings,

sufferings, and example of St. Paul, by whose preaching we Gentiles have been brought to the knowledge of the Gospel: and if we should be called upon to suffer contradiction, or reproach, or shipwreck, for the truth's sake, the same God that delivered him, can own and deliver us in all dangers and adversities: he that rescued his apostle from the fury of the waves, and the cruelty of unthinking heathen soldiers, can deliver all those who are engaged in the same undertakings, and bring them safe from a tempestuous sea of trouble in this world to his heavenly land; there to reign in peace with apostles and martyrs, under the captain of their salvation, Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON VIII.

IF IT BE POSSIBLE, AS MUCH AS LIETH IN YOU, LIVE PEACEABLY WITH ALL MEN, ROM. xii. 18.

THE first and greatest design of the Christian religion, is to reconcile man to God: the next, is to reconcile men to one another, and to abolish, if it were possible, all enmity from the earth. That this will actually be possible, the Apostle does not affirm: and, as things are now constituted, it certainly is not. The world is a mixture of good and evil: it is a field, wherein wheat and tares grow up together; a plantation, in which trees that bear good fruit are surrounded with briars and thorns, offensive to the flesh, and fit only to be cut up and burned in the fire. Peace, whether public or private, is to be maintained by endeavours which are

mutual;

mutual: as the roof of an house is kept up by a wall on *each side*. If either of these be withdrawn, ruin must be the consequence. No single person can secure that peace, which must arise from the joint endeavours of other people: but he must do his own part, and contribute what he can towards it.

The duties which a man owes to society, will depend much on that state of life, to which it hath pleased God to call him. Men in society differ from each other in their offices, as the limbs and members of the same body differ in their uses. We do not expect that the hands should speak, or that the feet should see: all men cannot perform high and eminent services to the public: but if every man keeps his own place and rank in quietness, he performs the duty enjoined in the text. And let not him that can do much, despise him that can do little; for mean as the offices of some men may appear, their help can as ill be spared, as that of the lower and weaker members in the body. The Providence of God hath tempered the world together with so much wisdom, that we are all necessary to one another: and supposing we were not so, there is no member of society so insignificant as to be incapable of doing mischief, and disturbing the peace of others.

Every man can do what vermin and creeping things, and insects are able to do; that is, every man if he sets about it, can make himself hateful and troublesome to other people.

They who are placed in a lower station, should therefore submit to the offices which Providence requires of them; and if they cannot do any great good, they should at least be careful to do no harm. But they whose character in life gives them any influence over others, are bound to study the peace of society in a more particular manner. It is frequently in their power to moderate the unhappy differences of contending brethren, or to sow the seeds of hatred, and to foment strife, till it spreads into a wide and destructive flame.

God, who is the common father of us all, hath given us many precepts, which ought to lead us to peace and unity amongst ourselves. The reasons upon which they are grounded, are such as these; that a contentious disposition is not only sinful in itself but is the occasion of a multitude of sins. Who, that has any knowledge of the world, does not see what strange opinions are kept up, what perverse actions are defended, and applauded, only for the purpose of supporting an opposition, when it hath been once begun. *Where envying and strife is,* saith the

the Apostle, *there is confusion and every evil work*. So that contention is a sort of mother-sin, which brings forth many others, and some of them such as the contending parties never thought of in the beginning of a dispute. Such is the obligation which arises from the consideration of our own nature: if we consider the nature of God, we are told, that he is *the God of peace*; that his holy spirit is the spirit of peace; that his kingdom is a kingdom of peace; and that they who hope to be members of it in heaven, where there will be nothing but peace, must first endeavour to agree together upon earth.

We have strange passions to contend with; and unless we set a strict watch over them, their natural tendency is to destroy us and disturb the world. Experience would teach us, if the bible did not, that the seeds of strife are in all the children of Adam; and that if they are left to themselves, they will as certainly grow up into disorder and confusion, as thorns and thistles will spring from their own proper seeds. It is chiefly on this account, that the world is so miserable a place as we find it to be. The inhabitants of it, blinded by ignorance, and agitated by every turbulent passion, are like a fleet of ships upon a rough sea in a dark night, which

are in continual danger of running foul of each other: and as no vessel can give a shock to another without receiving some injury to herself, so cannot any one man hurt another without diminishing his own peace and comfort at the same time.

Peace is so necessary to private happiness, that without it there can be no proper enjoyment of life: therefore, let us now proceed to enquire, how so great a blessing may be promoted amongst us.

He who revolves this subject in his mind, will soon discover, that the passion which propagates the greatest misery in this world, is no other than *pride*. Let pride be out of the question, and the world will soon be quiet; as the waves of the sea settle into a calm when the wind has done blowing. How is a man to stop the workings of his own pride, but by thinking meanly of himself, and being contented with his own station? Why do we quarrel with others, but because we give ourselves the preference, and wish to be set above them? So weak and silly is this vain passion of self-esteem, that two families have frequently been divided for life, only because they could not agree, which of the two ought to walk into a room before the other. Peace can be the effect only of a meek and humble

humble spirit. A proper opinion of ourselves will prevent all those murmurings and complainings, which are apt to arise in our hearts, when we see others preferred before us, either in the dispensations of divine Providence, or the favour of the world. In such a case, we shall be ready to confess, either that they owe more to their own industry than we do, or that they deserve better for their abilities, or, if neither of these, that the Providence of God hath some ends to serve by their advancement, into which, though we cannot penetrate at present, we may take it for granted they are the best and the wisest, and that they will appear so to us, when God shall be pleased to lay open before us his own secret ways and counsels.

If any man is tempted to repine at his own lot, let him consider, that it is absolutely necessary there should be a subordination of ranks in the world, each subservient to the other. All the members in a natural body cannot have the same place and the same office, some being appointed, as the apostle reminds us, *to honour, and some to dishonour.* The same God who hath disposed the limbs of the natural body in such an admirable order, hath given to men their proper stations in society, without error and without partiality. None ought to com-

plain, that God hath set them no higher, but to be thankful that he hath not placed them still lower. The poorest reptile or insect in nature hath life and being; is wonderfully made, and as wonderfully supported; which is much more than it could demand from its Creator by any natural right: so the lowest state of life among mankind hath many blessings and privileges, for which a tribute of thanks is due to the bountiful author of them. Many comforts are to be enjoyed by a thankful mind in the lowest station. The temperate and healthy inhabitant of the cottage is free from those distempers, which are brought upon the rich and honourable by luxury and indolence, and is unacquainted with the ridiculous cares and mortifications, which people of an higher rank are too apt to bring upon themselves by the boundless cravings of artificial appetites. To this consideration, a much higher may be added, which is this, that God hath given to the meanest of his servants an opportunity of obtaining and enjoying all the blessings of a better life: if he has with-held from them the riches and honours of this world, he has given to the poorest beggar, if a Christian, the privilege of claiming a crown of glory, and all the riches of immortality. There is a time drawing near, when we shall all be upon a level;

level; the prospect of which is sufficient to raise the expectations of the poor, and bring down the high looks of the proud. Those differences and distinctions amongst men, about which there is such a mighty bustle upon the stage of this present life, are but as shadows and dreams, which shall vanish away when the morning appeareth: and that they may not raise any disturbances amongst us, God hath found a way of bringing them to nothing already, in the judgment of every true disciple of Jesus Christ; whose gospel is intended to pull down this world in the heart, with all its vain distinctions, and to set up, in the place of these empty shadows, the great realities of the world to come. The gospel teaches Christians to consider themselves as members of Christ's body, and citizens of heaven. In this respect, they are all upon an equal footing: the rich has nothing to boast of; the poor hath nothing to complain of. St. *James* therefore makes the following proclamation to small and great—*Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich in that he is made low; because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.* The poor has no reason to complain any longer of his poverty, if God has made him *rich in faith*, and brought him into that society, every

every member of which is heir to a crown: and the rich has no reason to boast of that honour, which will set him never the higher in the kingdom of heaven; which is now but dross in the sight of God, and will soon be dust in the sight of men.

If these considerations were in force among Christians, there would be but little fighting and striving about the distinctions of this world. The doctrine of Christ and his Apostles would as certainly promote *peace on earth*, as it brings *Glory to God* in the highest heavens. If men did but permit the Gospel to take effect upon them, it would give them power to bridle the tongue; that unruly member, which is so often the instrument of discord and destruction: an offensive weapon, in the strictest sense; and, which often wounds deeper than the sword. What mischief and bloodshed might have been prevented, if the tongue could but have been silent, when it was under no obligation to speak! How great a fire hath been kindled by one little spark! one envious word hath set families into a flame, and lighted up that fire, to which the devil will endeavour to add fewel all the days of their life. There is no remedy in this case, but from the fear of God, and that faith, which will lead a man to self-abasement. Good prin-

ciples may lay an axe to the root of the evil, and devotion may get the better of impertinence. Let the judgment be corrected, and the heart amended, and then the tongue may become the instrument of peace. He was a wise philosopher, who bound his scholars to a silence of five years; that they might not use their tongues, till they knew how to govern them; nor speak, till they had something to say. He is said to have used this as a test of his disciples; concluding, that the scholar who could deny himself in that which is most difficult, would be able to govern himself in all other things.

Thus far I have endeavoured to shew you, that *humility* is a necessary qualification in those who would *live peaceably with all men.* I am now to observe, that *patience* in bearing with the weaknesses of our brethren, and forgiving the injuries we receive from them, is another qualification, as necessary as the former. The wisest among mankind are subject to errors and frailties, which require a charitable and favourable interpretation, and though we have no right to dispense with the laws of God, or our country, every man has a claim upon us for as many allowances as we can reasonably make; and it will be prudent in us to make them; because

cause we ourselves are compassed with infirmity, and may stand in need of that indulgence which we refuse to other people. Human nature being so prone to offences, it must needs happen that our own persons and interest will be touched upon some occasions by those with whom we have to do; and then it will appear, whether that spirit of patience and moderation which most men would be thought to possess, is real or affected. We know how to excuse those that offend others; but if the same persons offend ourselves, then we can give as many reasons why we ought to be revenged on them, as why they ought to be pardoned in all other cases.

In order to correct this mistake, let us consider, that when any injury is forgiven, all the ill consequences which might have followed, and which are generally ten times worse than the injury itself, are prevented in the beginning. Affronts and injuries are like venomous serpents, which creep about to spread poison and destruction among mankind: and here, it is not so much the injury itself (which perhaps is a mere trifle) that does all the mischief, but the evil thoughts and passions which are stirred up in the heart. The hurt is not owing to the teeth of the viper; which give but a very small wound,

but

but to the venom which they communicate to the mass of blood. Let an injury be rated according to its real value, and this evil will be prevented.

There is another advantage in this, of a much higher nature: for if we are ready to forgive others, we have reason to expect that God in like manner will forgive us: our prayers will find acceptance at the throne of grace: the hands that are undefiled with cruelty and revenge may be lifted up for mercy; while the unfeeling sinner, who has been implacable toward his fellow servants, shall in vain apply to God for that pardon which he knew not how to grant.

But farther; as we are to forgive the faults of others, we are to be careful not to commit any act of injustice ourselves. Deceit, and oppression, and fraud, are the declared enemies of peace: and indeed, much of the confusion we see in the world arises from the evil designs of those, who scruple not to advance their own worldly interest by undermining and defrauding their neighbours. These are the arts of the sons of Mammon, which deserve to be avoided and abhorred by every sincere disciple of Jesus Christ. *Pride*, as I have before observed, is the great disturber of the world; but it becomes worst of all when it is joined with *covetousness*.

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The man who would appear to *be* every thing, when he is nothing, only makes himself ridiculous: but when he would not only be every thing, but *have* every thing, he becomes a torment to himself, and a nuisance to his neighbours.

It appears then, that the virtues of humility, patience and justice, are naturally productive of peace: and they will generally be found to answer the purpose, I say generally; for the apostle hath expressed himself as if the success would be doubtful in some cases. Some natures are so savage and untractable, that it is impossible to live at peace with them. There ever were and will be those, who are *enemies unto peace*; who like wolves and tygers will always be growling; and delight more in strife, than in brotherly love and quietness. There is a sort of men in the world (God forbid there should be many of them) who measure their wit by their wealth, and their greatness by their ability to do mischief: who think they make no figure in life, but so far as they are troublesome to other people. The royal Psalmist, addressing himself to one of this stamp, gives to every malicious person such an odious character of himself as he would detest and fly from, if he had the grace to see and understand it.—"Why boastest "thou thyself, thou tyrant, that thou canst do "mischief?

" mischief? Whereas the goodness of God en-
" dureth yet daily." The greatness of God is measured by his goodness: his power is exercised in communicating light, and comfort; he openeth his hand, and the whole creation partakes of his bounty. Being perfect in love and beneficence, hs is therefore perfect in greatness. But look on the other hand, and you will find that mischief distinguishes the power of Satan: *his greatness* consists wholly in crossing the merciful plan of redemption, and counteracting the divine benevolence: the propagation of discord and disorder is necessary to the keeping up of his grandeur, and to the increase of his kingdom. They who follow such methods of making themselves considerable, may know of whom they have learned them, and with whom they will associate, when God shall cast out of his kingdom all things that offend. Different men have different talents, and may be appointed to different ends. Some may be ordained to try the patience of others, and thereby promote the glory of God without intending it, as toads, vipers, and vermin are answering some good purpose in the natural creation; and we ought rather to adore the wisdom which hath made them, and to give thanks that there are such, than be offended with the Providence which permits

permits them to live. What account can we give of such a perverse disposition, but this; that they who are thus at enmity with mankind are first at enmity with God. The wicked man, having quarrelled with God and his own conscience, is not able to agree with any body else. As there is no peace *to* the wicked, there is none to be found *with* them. They are troubled with that distemper of the mind, which blackens every object they look upon, and renders them discontented, implacable, and unmerciful. So that to sum up all I have said in a few words, be good Christians, be at peace with God and your own hearts, and then you will be at peace with all the world.

The rules I have laid down, if men did but follow them, would almost make an heaven upon earth. Every one might then sit undisturbed *under his vine and under his fig-tree*, in a quiet possession of his own rights. The helpless traveller need not then be afraid of those who lie in wait to plunder and destroy. The man who endeavours to deal justly and uprightly, would be secure in his property and his reputation: there would be no decay, no leading into captivity, and no complaining in our streets. Happy would the people be who were in such a case! but this is a state we can never

never hope to attain in this life. So long as there is ambition, extortion, and luxury above us; poverty, idleness, profaneness, and dishonesty below us, no perfect peace is to be enjoyed. But let not these things discourage us: our good endeavours, with the blessing of God, will be sure to succeed in a great measure: and if they should not answer our wishes, here, we shall certainly be the better for them hereafter. *Blessed are the peace-makers,* saith our Lord, *for they shall be called the children of God.* He that came down from heaven to promote the great work of peace, will own those as children to God, and brethren to himself, who have been encouraged to follow his example.

Grace and peace, saith St. Peter, *be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ:* teaching us in these words, that peace will be multiplied among us, through the knowledge of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ: whose word informs us, that we are all brethren descended from the same Father, and have one faith and one Redeemer; we are all fellow-travellers upon the same road to a better world, and ought not to fall out one with another by the way. And here, who can help lamenting, that religion, which ought to

unite men, should ever be the means of dividing them; that the bond of peace should ever become the instrument of discord. It is to be wished, that we were all of the same profession; that *with one mind and one mouth we might glorify God.* But as this can never be, it is the part of the peaceable man to find out and esteem what is valuable in all professions, and what may serve in a certain degree as a bond of peace to all. If then there be any man who worships Jesus Christ as God, and depends upon him as his Saviour, and loves the wisdom of Scripture, and sees the vanity of the world, every sincere Christian is a friend to that man. As to the errors there may be in his profession, he has another master to whom he is accountable for them; and it is wiser to lament them with compassion, than to reprove them with bitterness; for that very seldom does any good. Any persons whatsoever, who are seriously disposed to religion, and of a peaceable temper, may find something to agree in, some seat to sit down upon together, if they have but the patience to look for it: and how much better is it for them so to do, than to make sport for unbelievers by their jealousies and disputes. Let us then resolve to follow the Apostle's advice, and do all that lieth in us

to live peaceably with all men, for the sake of that present comfort and edification which peace brings with it, and the glorious reward that shall crown it at last. For though we are not able to attain to perfect peace in this disorderly world, they who labour after it shall at length find it, in that holy and heavenly Jerusalem, which will be *built as a city that is at unity in itself: peace shall be within her walls, and plenteousness within her palaces.* Then shall the *flock* of God's *pasture* be unmolested in the land of righteousness; and shall enjoy that perfect rest which remaineth for the people of God, under the direction of that *shepherd*, who is the *king of righteousness and of peace.*

SERMON IX.

BUT AND IF THAT EVIL SERVANT SHALL SAY IN HIS HEART, MY LORD DELAYETH HIS COMING, AND SHALL BEGIN TO SMITE HIS FELLOW SERVANTS, AND TO EAT AND DRINK WITH THE DRUNKEN; THE LORD OF THAT SERVANT SHALL COME IN A DAY WHEN HE LOOKETH NOT FOR HIM, AND IN AN HOUR THAT HE IS NOT AWARE OF, AND SHALL CUT HIM ASUNDER, AND APPOINT HIM HIS PORTION WITH THE HYPOCRITES: THERE SHALL BE WEEPING AND GNASHING OF TEETH. MATTH. XXIV. 48, and seq.

THE monition here delivered, is in the style of a parable, and contains the history and catastrophe of a *careless christian.* It is not aimed at all wicked men in general, whether Jews, Turks or Heathens, but at those only, who professing

fessing themselves to be the *servants* of God, forget him, and go over to the service of the world. So that by the *evil servant* here mentioned, we are to understand the apostatizing or worldly-minded Christian, who bears the name of a *servant* of the Lord Christ, but in practice employs himself in the business of another master, who has gotten the possession of his affections.

If we wish to see a perfect description of any man, we must in the first place be made acquainted with his principles. He appears then to be one, who deceives himself, and *says in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming.* He lays it down as a principle of action, that no account, at least no immediate account, of his actions will be required. He has a lord or master, who for a while is absent; and the report goes amongst his fellow-servants, that this lord will return and reckon with him: but this reckoning, in his estimation, is either none at all; or so distant, that he is under no necessity of paying any regard to it. His lord has been absent so long, and wicked men have been so often threatened with his return, to no purpose; that it is more probable he will never return any more.

Principle and practice have as natural a de-

pendence on each other as the cause and the effect. An evil life grows naturally from an evil heart; and an evil heart will necessarily produce an evil life. The servant here spoken of begins with thinking as an infidel, and then proceeds to act as a brute: he *begins to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken.* Thus it is in every other case of the kind; immoral and sensual practices being the natural offspring of some false delusive principle, which is first *said in the heart:* neither can any man follow his own corrupt inclinations, till he has either denied or perverted the revealed will of God.

But the parable proceeds to teach us, that although a man may cheat his understanding for a while, the deception is not long to be enjoyed. The day, which he puts from him, will certainly come, and be the more terrible for being unexpected. *The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of.* His false principle will then be overthrown by a matter of fact. He says within himself, day after day, *my lord delayeth his coming*; till his lord actually is come; and then his folly is manifest, when there is no time left to make any advantage of the discovery. Such as he is, he is seized upon, and brought before his master

master to give an account of himself, and receive the due punishment of his insolence: which is the thing declared in the words that conclude the parable; *he shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

The parable then consists of these four particulars, 1. The unbelief. 2. The careless life. 3. The conviction. And 4. The condemnation of an *evil servant*, who, knowing his lord's will, and preparing not himself, is to expect a punishment beyond the measure of other wicked men.

Before I expound these things at large, it is proper to inform you, that the words of the text allude very plainly to the wickedness and punishment of the idolatrous Israelites in the wilderness. The people who had submitted to the authority of Moses, to be guided by him to the land of Canaan, were too well affected to the religion and morals of Egypt; both of which were irreconcileable with the faith and practice of the servants of God. When it became necessary that their ruler Moses should depart from them for a while into the mount of God, he gave this charge to the elders; *tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you.* Having thus assured them of his *return*, he

continued forty days and forty nights in the mount; but he had not left them long, before they began to reason about his absence, and to make their use of it; *when they saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, they gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, up, make us Gods which shall go before us; for as to this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.* In this they discover the first workings of an evil heart of unbelief, which doubts of an event that must necessarily follow in the course of things; and of which it hath received all possible assurance. Moses had departed from them, only to return better furnished and instructed for the execution of his ministry; and without his return, his departure could have no meaning. Of this, however, the people doubted; and from unbelief they proceeded to ungodly living and profaneness. The evil servant in the text, having put off the day of reckoning, begins to *smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken:* as the disobedient Israelites, taking advantage of the delay of Moses, *sat down* before an idol *to eat and drink, and rose up to play;* first encouraging a principle of unbelief,

and

and then defiling themselves with corrupt practices.

But *the Lord of these servants came in a day when they looked not for him, and in an hour that they were not aware of.* Moses, whose authority they had renounced, and whose very person they had almost forgotten, comes down from the mount unlooked for, and surprises them in the midst of their ungodly mirth. They had eaten and drank to excess, and were now busy in singing and dancing before the golden calf. Their folly and ingratitude were now manifest: there was no time for repentance, neither were they disposed for it, while they were in the midst of their sin. Their judge was come upon them; and nothing remained, but that they should receive the punishment of their apostacy. This is the last article, wherein the evil servant resembles the rebellious Israelites. He, according to the terms of this parable, is to be *cut in sunder, and to have his portion with the hypocrites, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth:* so they were instantly cut asunder with the sword. For *Moses said, who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them,*

them, thus saith the Lord God of Israel, put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses, and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

St. *Paul* hath wisely exhorted us, not to be *ignorant* of the history of those servants, who were before us in the church of God: because the things which are recorded of them *happened for ensamples* to us, and are *written for our admonition.* Their trials were the same in kind with ours, and our miscarriages were foreshewn in their disobedience. Amongst other particulars of their history, the Apostle hath selected that which we are now considering, and applied it as a warning to all Christians: *neither*, says he, *be ye idolaters, as were some of them: as it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.* In this he hath followed the doctrine of our blessed Saviour, who hath represented this story to us in other words, and applied it for our admonition. This history of the idolatrous Israelites, and his parable of the *evil servant*, consist of the same particulars, succeeding in the same order, and requiring

requiring the same interpretation; which observation will be of much use to us in applying the words of the text to Christ and the Christian Church; of whom the person of Moses, and the camp of Israel in the wilderness were the most considerable figures the world ever saw.

The *Lord*, mentioned in the text, is without all doubt the Lord Christ; who said of himself to his disciples, *ye call me* Master *and* Lord, *and ye say well, for so I am.* As the Israelites were redeemed from the bondage of Egypt, then passed through the Red Sea, and encamped in the wilderness; so we Christians have been redeemed from the powers of sin, and conducted, through the waters of baptism, into the church of Christ, the camp of the true Israelites, which is upon its progress through the wilderness of this world to the heavenly land of promise. As Moses, who was their *Lord*, left the camp for a time, and went up into the Mount, to receive a law, which he was to deliver to the people: so Christ, our Lord, ascended up on high, that he might send a new law into the world by the hands of his Apostles. He is now absent from us at the right hand of God, and we his servants are here below in this wilderness. With respect to this his absence

sence from the day of his ascension to his return in judgment, he represents himself to us as a *Samaritan* upon a *journey;* who, after a certain time, was to *come again* and reckon with the host. In another place he describes himself as a *bridegroom*; who *tarried* for a while, but at length should *return from the wedding.* Again he is signified to us by a man *travelling into a far country;* who, after a long time, should come back again to *reckon with his servants.*

If we go on with the comparison, we shall conclude, that the behaviour of the faithless Israelites, in the absence of Moses, will be accomplished in the people of the Christian world; of whom it is but too apparent, that the far greater number now do, and will continue to corrupt themselves, as the *evil servant* in the parable. He used the absence of his master as an opportunity of indulging his own vicious nature, and of acting as if he had no master but himself. And are we not all of us witnesses, that Christians make the same use of the absence of Jesus Christ, as if their Lord would never return to require any account of them? Within the compass of a few years the people of this nation seem far advanced in all sorts of wickedness; and from the principles which

which prevail, the next generation may be worse than the present. And what is the beginning of all this? What but a neglect of the great doctrines of faith, and a consequent inattention to the judgment that must shortly come upon us? Does not the world cry out as it were with one common voice, *my Lord delayeth his coming?* Or, in the language of St. Peter, who set down the words which should afterwards be used by the scoffers of the last days, *where is the promise of his coming; for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the creation of the world?* If you should go amongst a large company of people, commonly called by the name of Christians, and should mention the coming of their Saviour, as an event soon to be expected, and greatly to be wished for; some would be ready to laugh at your simplicity; others would look grave, and be out of countenance for you; and it is to be questioned whether one single person, in any polite assembly, would have either the courage or the inclination to go on with the subject. And is not this a melancholy proof that they say in their hearts, though they do not declare it openly with their lips, *my Lord delayeth his coming;* and that they have a secret satisfaction in putting away all thought

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of their Master's second appearance in the world?

If you proceed to consider their life and manners, you will discover them to be of such a sort as can agree only with an *evil heart of unbelief*. When the people had forgotten Moses, they fell to making a molten image, and were given up to all kinds of excess in eating, drinking, singing, and dancing in the worship of it. So it is now: when faith is gone, then the heart is given up to the service of the world; and idleness, gluttony, drunkenness, gaming, a multiplicity of theatres, and places of public diversion, extravagance, debauchery, profaneness and sedition, are the sad marks of its apostacy. Is not the Christian world over-run with these corrupt practices? Have they not first *said in their hearts*, and then have they not proceeded to act, as the evil servant in the text? This being the case, it is easy to pronounce what will follow: for it cannot possibly be long before the *Lord* of such *servants shall come in a day when they look not for him, and in an hour that they are not aware*. When Moses was forgotten by the Israelites, he came upon them, and surprised them in the midst of their idolatry. Thus it hath been and thus it will be: it is an invariable rule in the order of God's providence,

that

that when men say *peace, then sudden destruction cometh upon them.* Such was the state of the world in the days of Noah, that preacher of righteousness. He declared publicly to the world, that God would bring a flood upon them to destroy them; and they had an opportunity of seeing him prepare the ark for an hundred and twenty years: yet they believed nothing of the judgment which hung over their heads; but continued all their evil practices till the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away. So also in the days of Lot, they were secure in their pleasures; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded: but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. So will it be with the Christian world, at the coming of Christ: their hearts will be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares, and pleasures of this life, so that the day of their visitation shall come when they look not for it: and if we consider what state the world is even now in, we cannot believe it will be long before the Gospel will be accomplished. And then, how dreadful will be the consternation of a thoughtless and profane world! their mirth

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all silenced in a moment; their grandeur blasted; their pleasure departed as a vision of the night; their vain boastings of happiness and security confuted by the actual presence of their judge in the clouds of heaven; and themselves hurried away, without any preparation, to the dreadful tribunal: some of them surprized at masquerades and places of entertainment; some in the act of cheating and defrauding their neighbours; some cursing and swearing over a gaming table; others lying drunk upon the earth in a condition worse than that of the beasts; what a miserable preparation is this for the sight of a just judge, and an entrance upon the awful scenes of eternity! But thus it must be. In vain shall the ministers of Jesus Christ lift up their voice like a trumpet: the world is too far gone to take any of their warnings; wickedness is too bold for any words to reform it; and therefore we may take up that exclamation of the Psalmist, *It is time for thee, Lord, to lay to thine hand, for they have destroyed thy law.* And this brings us to the execution of that vengeance, which is the last thing mentioned in the text; *he shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* The place of this punish-

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ment, and the punishment itself, are suited to the nature of the crime. For where ought he to have his portion, but with the *hypocrites;* who, in his baptism, pretended to be the servant of God; but, in practice, never served any thing but his worldly interests and sensual inclinations? His being *cut asunder*, signifies his eternal separation from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power: the sword which shall give the stroke, is the word of God, which he has neglected and despised: the *weeping* which shall be in that place of torment, will be a fit recompense for all that profane mirth and noise with which he used to delight himself. They who now mourn and weep for their sins, shall hereafter be comforted, and have their tears wiped away: but they who laugh at sin, and make free with things sacred, as subjects of ridicule, will exchange their laughter for lamentation. The *gnashing of the teeth* with anguish and torment is the just reward of excess and drunkenness. The teeth of the Epicure, which never knew how to refrain themselves on a principle of duty, were the instruments of his sin; and will therefore be applied to express the justice as well as the sharpness of his sufferings.

What has been delivered concerning the

character and the end of an evil servant will lead us naturally to the following inferences:

First, that it is the interest of every Christian to guard against the deceit of an *evil heart;* and to be careful that there is no lurking poison of *unbelief.* The generality of men are apt to conceive very shallow notions of faith. If they allow the facts of Christianity, they rest satisfied with their religion; not considering, that if they have any faith, properly so called, it will take possession of their affections. Let them then examine their own hearts, whether they think with any pleasure about the *return* of their *Lord,* Jesus Christ? Whether they ever converse together, and *comfort one another,* as the Apostle hath admonished them, with *words* upon this great subject? Whether they can pray sincerely, that the kingdom of God may come, and this vain world be removed out of the way to make room for that *new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness?* Is their faith so strong and operative, as to lessen that esteem and value, which they feel naturally for the things of this world? If not, they may assure themselves, it is too much like that of the evil servant; who had just so much religion as to talk about

about his Lord, but not enough to expect him and prepare for his appearance. As unbelief betrays a man into carelessness and pleasure, so will a right faith be sure to operate with a contrary effect, and will make him sober, serious, vigilant and devout. The duty of a good servant is expressed in those words of our blessed Master, *let your loins be girded about and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for the Lord, when he shall return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.* And surely gratitude as well as prudence should have its influence in making us serious and vigilant. For consider how he, our Lord and Master, condescended to watch for our salvation; continuing whole nights in prayer, and retiring into silence and darkness upon a mountain, to make intercession for a world of sinners. He offered himself to the scourge, to the thorns, to the cross, to the grave. Many painful hours and days did he watch for us, and paid at last the price of our redemption, even his own precious blood: yet we, miserable wretches as we are, think it hard to deny ourselves any little gratification, and to spend even one single hour in prayer to God or in humiliation for our sins.

Our subject teaches us to consider secondly, that as the return of Christ to judgment is reserved for the world in general, and will come upon them when it is least looked for; so death is an unknown period, reserved for every Christian, taken as an individual; and the day and hour of *it* may surprize him as much as the day of judgment shall surprise those who shall be alive at the Lord's coming. If we do not make it the great rule of our lives, to be prepared for death, it may come upon us when we are most unprepared. To presume upon youth or health, which are made the grounds of a false confidence, is the worst of vanity and folly; as daily experience too frequently teaches us.

I am here offering such considerations as are of use to all people, of all ages, and at all times. Happy will it be for us, if we lay them to heart: then will our *loins be girded about, and our lights burning;* and instead of being cut asunder in wrath, we shall depart in peace with those words of Jacob in our lips.—*I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.*

You have heard the punishment of an evil servant: now learn the reward of a good one. —"Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, "when he cometh, shall find watching: verily "I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and

"make

" make them sit down to meat, and come forth " and serve them." Excess and riot can last but a very short time; and when they are over, they terminate in weeping and gnashing of the teeth: but temperance and vigilance for the Lord's sake, shall end in a perpetual feast. To abstain from the false mirth of this present time, the noise of which, while it lasts, is no better than the *crackling of thorns under a pot*, which consume themselves with their own blaze; is to find the true joys of eternity: and if the servant of the Lord can but refrain from *eating and drinking with the drunken*, he shall be rewarded with better fare and better company, when he shall partake of the marriage supper of the lamb, and shall sit down with *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.*

SERMON X.

AND HE SAID UNTO HIM, IF THY PRESENCE GO NOT WITH ME, CARRY US NOT UP HENCE. EXOD. XXXiii. 15.

THUS did Moses signify his distress for himself, and his people, when God threatened to withdraw his presence from them in the wilderness. The prophet knew it was impossible for them to go through the dangers and difficulties of their passage to Canaan, unless the God who had brought them out of Egypt should still be with them to guide and protect them. No less hazardous is the situation of every Christian in this world, than theirs was in their way to Canaan. We are all upon a journey, as they were, to the promised rest; and we are beset with such difficulties, dangers and temptations, that

that there can be no hope of arriving at it in safety, unless God shall conduct and defend us in our progress. So that we may each of us take up the words of Moses, and say, *if thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence.* Miserable is the condition of those, who either do not know how necessary the presence of God is to every man, or who have neither assurance nor sense of its effects towards their preservation.

I shall therefore shew you, in discoursing on the words I have chosen, that his presence always has been with his church, and that it extends to every individual.

That the presence of God was with the church of the Hebrews, must be plain to every one who reads their history: and while to us this presence is an object of faith, to them it was visible, in the cloud and the pillar of fire which attended their camp, and the glory which was seen on Mount Sinai. But the presence of God was as manifest by its effects. He divided the sea for them; he confounded the host of Egypt which pursued them, he furnished them with water from the rock, and bread from heaven; he healed them when they were bitten with serpents; their clothes did not wear out, nor their shoes wax old upon their feet;

their enemies were terrified and driven out before them; vengeance was executed upon those who tempted and seduced them; and when they were about to be settled in the promised land, all the wonders God had wrought were set before them, as inducements to gratitude, and obligations to obedience.

If we look to the history of the Christian church: that also was propagated in a wonderful manner, by the power of its preachers, and the fortitude of its martyrs; whom God invested with such wisdom as overpowered the disputers of this world, and prevailed against the kingdoms of the earth; which were at length converted *from the power of satan unto God.* The universal monarchy established in the Roman Empire, was really aiding and assisting toward the spreading of the Gospel, while it seemed to persecute and resist it; and at last the Christian religion was received as the religion of the empire.

We are apt to admire the works of God when he interposes for the deliverance and preservation of his people; but his providence is equally to be admired, in the corrections and punishments which he sends upon them for their disobedience. For why does God chuse any people, but to make them wise and holy, and lead

lead them to eternal happiness by the ways of truth and righteousness? If they forget their profession, and disgrace it by their manners, they are corrected in mercy, for the preservation of God's truth, and the reformation of the society, which he has separated from the world. In the 105th psalm the prophet celebrates the mercies of God, in redeeming the people from Egypt, and feeding them in the wilderness; but in the 106th psalm, the same mercy is farther celebrated for the mighty acts of his judgments in visiting them for their sins: how he sent leanness into their soul for their lusting after the food of Egypt; how he destroyed Dathan and Abiram, and sent a fire and a pestilence upon the murmuring congregation: how he overthrew them in the wilderness for their idolatry in worshipping the golden calf, and their unbelief in not receiving the good report which was brought of the land of Canaan; how he sent a plague upon those who had joined themselves unto Baal Peor, and after their settlement in Canaan, when they defiled themselves with the works of idolatry, he gave them into the hands of the heathen, and they that hated them were Lords over them: then their enemies oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their

their hand. These are the works of God's Providence toward his church; he delivers it from the power of the world; he punishes it for disobedience, and humbles it to effect its reformation.

If we were to examine the history of the several nations of christendom, since they were taken into the church; we should find, that his providence has acted by the same rules, for the preservation of his truth and the reformation of his people.

But now I mean to prove that his providence extends to particular persons, as well as to nations and the church at large: for every person is a church and nation to himself, and no concerns can be so near to him as his own; therefore it would be of small profit to him to hear that God's presence attends the church; unless it can also be shewn, that it extends to single persons. And this it certainly does, and must from the reason of the thing: for why doth God's presence attend the church, but for the benefit of the individuals of which it consists?

His care is upon the whole for the sake of the parts; and the salvation of single men is the object of all his mighty works and of all the means of grace: he willeth not the death of any one sinner, but is desirous that all should return

turn and be saved: therefore his attention is as truly upon individuals as upon societies. And the same rules are observed in both cases. In regard to churches and nations, Providence acts for deliverance or punishment as occasion requires; with regard to single people, the measure of God's interposition is according to the state of a man's soul. When a man is mindful of him, and careful of his duty, he gives a blessing to his affairs and undertakings. When success begets confidence and too much reliance upon this world, some loss or disappointment is sent upon him to rectify his mistake; when he falls into wilful sin, some sorrow or sickness brings him to self-examination, and he finds the cause of his visitation. When our Lord said to the man whom he had raised from the palsy, *Go and sin no more lest a worse thing come unto thee*; all these inferences may be drawn from that short admonition: first, that his sickness was a visitation for his sin: it did not happen by chance: secondly, that he knew *what* sin in particular was the cause of his suffering; because he could not otherwise have profited by the admonition; for it is not to be supposed, that our Saviour, when he said, *sin no more*, meant, that he should be perfect and without sin; it being impossible for man in this life to

attain to a sinless state: thirdly, it was implied, that he should pray for the grace of God; without which, though a man knows his sin, he will not be able to forsake it: fourthly, that if the afflictions sent upon a sinner do not reform him, something worse is to be expected; whence it is reasonable to think, no man ever was consigned to extreme punishment or total ruin, till he had slighted the lesser warnings of Providence. In some cases, the goodness of God operates in a striking manner, by delivering us from some sudden and imminent danger, to remind us of our continual dependance upon him. We look back with terror for a while, and wonder how it was possible for us to escape with life under such circumstances; but when we have rightly considered the thing, we see the hand of God, and feel the obligation we are under, of dedicating to his service the life which he has preserved to us.

All these things worketh God oftentimes with men; and he is now working the same with many every day. As his presence was with the Israelites in the wilderness, and his power acted for their preservation and correction, so it is now with us. Not a single circumstance befel them, which, at some stage of our journey through life, does not happen to us. He gives

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us meat and drink; though not from a rock, nor from the clouds of heaven, yet often in some strange and unexpected way, which it was impossible for us to foresee. As he punished their faults, by bringing war upon them from the wicked nations who hated them, and took delight in oppressing them; so he raises up enemies for the trial and exercise of good men, if their case require it. We are told, that *when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.* Whence it follows, that if his enemies disturb him, this may happen, because there is something in his ways which *displeases the Lord,* and wants to be corrected. Perhaps he has too much pride, or too little patience; and enemies are of great use to exercise our patience, and mortify our pride, by informing us of our failings, which they are always glad to discover. He who knows there is an enemy near, with a mouth open to publish his faults, looks the more sharply to his conduct, that his enemy may be disappointed.

Sometimes it may be necessary, not only that our enemies should be at war with us, but that even our friends should turn against us; that we may learn to depend less upon earthly comforts, and draw nearer to that one sure friend, who

who hath said *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.*

In so high a subject as this of God's special Providence, there must of course be some difficulties, which will try those who are strong in faith, and perplex those who are weak in knowledge. These I shall propose and explain as briefly as I can. There are two cases, which at first sight seem to disagree with our doctrine; namely, the prosperity of the wicked, and the persecution of the godly: but these, when duly considered, will fall in with it.

As to the prosperity of the wicked, it is to be noted, that there are minds which set no value upon any thing, but the possession and enjoyment of this world, and determine to have it at any rate. God permits it to them: he allows them what they desire. So Abraham said to the rich man in the parable, *Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things:* not such things as were good in themselves, but good in thy estimation; they were *thy good things*; such as thou didst enjoy and set thy heart upon, without seeking or desiring any better. This the rich man knew, and so had nothing to say. He to whom God permits what the receiver *calls good,* and prefers to every thing else, cannot accuse Providence of taking

taking part against him. And had it been denied to him, it had probably only vexed his unrighteous soul to no purpose: for mortifications and corrections, though good in their proper place, are distinguishable as such only to the eye of faith; and we are assured too truly, that *all men have not faith.* The prophet David, when he reasoned with himself upon the dispensations of Providence, was soon relieved under this difficulty: *I have seen,* said he, *the ungodly in great prosperity, and flourishing like a green bay-tree.* But then it follows, *yet he passed away, and lo, he was not; yea I sought him, but he could not be found.* His life, though splendid and promising for a time, was short and transient. He seemed to himself to have taken deep root in the earth, and thought his fruit would endure; but a blast struck him on a sudden, perhaps when he thought least about it. He was preparing to enlarge his granaries, and enjoy the increase of his goods, and *that night his soul was required of him.* Self-indulgence is a burthen, and they who live without it are frequently in better spirits; plenty breeds fulness, and fulness breeds diseases; and so the lives of the rich are often much shorter than they might be; or it may please God by some sudden stroke to cut short the progress of a worldly

worldly man, to teach others not to *trust in uncertain riches.* Besides, the good things of this life are often but a temptation and a snare upon the passions: the great and the wealthy are in a slippery situation, more liable to fall than other men; and their circumstances bring them into so many evils, that contentment with safety is far preferable to grandeur and danger, even when we consider nothing but the present life. So that upon the whole, we have no objection against a special Providence from this consideration.

Neither is there any real objection from the sufferings of good men, if we take their condition altogether. To those who place all their pride in the esteem of men, and all their pleasure in ease and indolence, they seem to be under great disadvantage, as if Providence neglected them: but this is so far from being the case, that the greatest favourites of heaven, to whom Providence has been most attentive, have been called to troubles and sufferings in this world, from wicked and unreasonable men. Persons of distinction, commonly so called, are they whom man has honoured, and who make a figure with their titles and their outward appearance: but persons of distinction in the sight of God, are they who are of superior minds and

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rich in faith; and of such it is the *privilege* to be scorned and hated by an evil world. Read the instrument of St. Paul's preferment, and you will find it runs in this style—He is a chosen vessel *unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and Kings, and the children of Israel: for I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.* His suffering was no sign that God had forsaken him; it was his profession as a chosen vessel, his privilege, his honour as an ambassador of Jesus Christ. And all Christians are called to the same condition of life; honoured of God, and opposed by the world; persecuted, but not forsaken; and, when they suffer for the truth, his grace is more abundant, so that they can sing with joy under such circumstances as would provoke others to lamentation, and drive them to despair. Paul and Silas *sang praises* to God in a dungeon at midnight, when their feet were fast in the stocks. But their minds were still free and happy; for *the word of God was not bound. Ye shall know the truth,* said Christ, *and the truth shall make you free*; with a sort of freedom which no sum can purchase; the freedom of the mind: a freedom from the bondage of error, and vice, and fashion, that variable foolish tyrant; a freedom, which gives us a right to con-

verse with God: to search into the treasures of his wisdom; to hope in him, to trust in him, and sing praises to him; all of which are privileges, such as the world cannot take away. The miser may be robbed of his wealth, the prince of his kingdom; but the Christian cannot lose the treasures of his heart, and as to the value of them, the psalm of a saint, within the walls of a prison, has more real comfort in it than the triumphs of an emperor, if he lives without God in the world.

Another difficulty yet remains with respect to the doctrine of divine Providence. Some think it an office unworthy and troublesome, beneath the Almighty, to attend to the multiplicity of small occurrences in human life. But this arises only from our imperfect way of considering things, and measuring the powers of God by the conceptions of man. No office can be burthensome to him whose *eyes are in every place*, and whose word can speak a world into being. Our Saviour hath extended the attention of Providence to the lowest particulars in the creation; to the hairs of our head, and to the life of a sparrow. How can the resurrection of the same body be brought to pass, unless he whose eyes did see our substance before it was perfect shall have it still under his view

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after its dissolution? His attention therefore does not only extend to single persons, but to the dust of the earth, and to single atoms. How often do we see the most trifling occurrences productive of the greatest events? All are therefore equally under the direction of God; the small as well as the great; for they depend upon one another. If it were possible to suppose any thing independant of Providence, it would be the casting of a lot; but the wise man affirms, *the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposal thereof is of the Lord.* Prov. xvi. 33. And accordingly, in the chusing of an Apostle to succeed Judas, they referred the matter to the divine direction by the casting of a lot, and supposed that the Lord, according to their prayer had thereby *shewed* which of the two *He* had *chosen.*

Having thus considered and stated the doctrine of Providence, with the certainty of God's presence and attention to the ways of men; let me tell you, the belief of this is so essential to the profession of a Christian, and so necessary to the comfort of life, that I know of no better test of the state of a man's soul, than a daily sense of God's presence with him, for the direction of his life, either by his own immediate act, or the subordinate ministration of his holy an-

gels, who have received a *charge* for the preservation of the servants of God. Wicked men have no liking to this subject; as if they expected no good to themselves from the attention of heaven. Good men have no greater support in this world: they love to think and discourse upon it; and they celebrate the mercies they have received. Jacob, in his blessing, addresses himself *to the God day, which had fed him all his life long unto that, and to the angel which had redeemed him from all evil.* St. Paul, looking back upon the persecutions and afflictions of his life, had a certain knowledge, that *out of them all the Lord had delivered him.* And the same knowledge will be more or less in every Christian, who reflects upon the occurrences of his life past. He may not be able to say, as the Apostle did, *once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep:* but, if his eyes are open, and he speaks the truth, he may say in other words, "at such a place, and at such a time, was I "preserved, when my fortune, my comfort, my "health, my life, my soul were in danger: "many perils have I seen, from which nothing "but the hand of God could save me; many "more there must have been, perhaps worse "and greater, which I could not see: but *out*

"*of*

" *of them all the Lord delivered me,* and I am " alive at this day to praise him."

Without a firm belief of God's preventing and directing power, good men would not know how to live; and they see, that for want of it, many are lost. He that has lived long enough to observe how many dangers there are in the world, of which he has no foresight, and thinks there is nothing to preserve him, but that *chance,* by which others *seem to be destroyed,* is in a miserable condition; and I would not be in the like for all the world. When it is found, that health is uncertain, and pleasure deceitful; that there are evils, which wealth cannot remove; nor wisdom provide against; and when with all this there is no sense of God's Providence correcting our sins, and bringing good out of evil; then only disappointment becomes intolerable, and men send themselves out of the world in despair.

As the navigator, who has sailed round the world, and is arrived in safety at his own dwelling, delights to survey the dangers of the voyage, with his many deliverances from storms and shipwreck: and as the Israelites, when conducted to the land of Canaan, discoursed together on the miracles God had wrought in

Egypt, with the perils of the wilderness, their various encampments, the victories they had obtained, and the cities they had destroyed; and repeated the wondrous narrative to their children, listening around them; so we may suppose, it will constitute a part of the blessedness of heaven, to look back upon the vicissitudes of this mortal life; and that the saints will delight for endless ages, in comparing the trials they underwent, the dangers they escaped, and the mercies they received in this their pilgrimage; adding thereto the greater wonders of their walk through the valley of the shadow of death, their resurrection, ascension, and glorification, which are yet to come; all of which will furnish matter for such songs, and be celebrated with such sounds, as no ear hath yet heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive.

In some passages of the *Revelation*, we have a slight prospect of this scene, with a foretaste of this heavenly entertainment. "I "saw (saith the beloved disciple) as it were a "sea of glass mingled with fire, and them that "had gotten the victory stand on the sea of "glass, having the harps of God. And they "sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and

" and of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvel-
" lous are thy works, Lord God Almighty;
" just and true are thy ways, thou King of
" Saints." *Rev.* xv. 2, 3.

SERMON XI.

FOOLS MAKE A MOCK AT SIN; BUT AMONG THE RIGHTEOUS THERE IS FAVOUR. PROV. xiv. 9.

BEFORE we consider rightly, it may be imagined, that the words of Solomon in this place give encouragement to sin; as if sin were favoured by the righteous, while it is mocked at by fools. But the words have another meaning, and that a very instructive one: they teach us, that *fools*, those inconsiderate people who are without a proper sense of religion, mock at sin, as a matter of ridicule; while the righteous have compassion upon sinners, as upon persons under the greatest misfortune in this world. He only can mock at sin, who knows nothing of the danger and misery that attends

attends it. Laughter is, generally speaking, a sign of ignorance: it is the lowest faculty of a rational being, and the great instrument which weak people employ upon all occasions. They laugh at godliness, because they see no reason for it; they laugh at seriousness, because their own thoughts are vain and shallow; they laugh at misery, because they are without the tender feelings of humanity; they laugh at sin, because they do not consider the dreadful effects of it; they laugh at what is great and sacred, because they are attached to little and profane objects. Much laughter is, therefore, the symptom of a bad heart, or a mean understanding; and hath always been so reputed. The righteous man, who knows God, and the world, and himself, and considers things as they are, finds no pleasure in mockery; especially, when sin is the object of it. The ruin of an immortal soul; the displeasure of Almighty God; the terrors of everlasting judgment; all of which are inseparable from the consideration of sin, are so serious, that they check the mirth of a righteous man, and dispose him to sentiments of soberness and compassion. Instead of mocking at the sin, he is afflicted for the sinner; he makes every charitable allowance for him, and is ready to do every

every thing in his power to deliver him from the effects of his own folly.

On this occasion, we have the fool appearing to us under his worst character, and the righteous under his best. The fool is never so much a fool, as when he becomes censorious, and mocks at sin: the righteous is never so respectable in his righteousness, as when he is favourable and compassionate to sinners. You will readily guess at the reason, why I have chosen to set these things before you at this time *. My desire is to lead you to the proper use which ought to be made of the example we have before us this day in the church; and to stop the mouths of those (if there be any such) who may forget their Christian profession so far, as to mock at the offence, when they ought to be grieved for the offender. I hope very few of those who are here present will be tempted to trespass in this way. They who are sensible of their own sins, and intend to repent of them, will be too wise to mock, either at the sin, or the repentance, of others: and they who, perhaps, at present do not resolve to amend, may yet have sense enough to condemn themselves;

* March 17, 1777, when this sermon was preached, two young women, by their own choice, did public penance in the church, at *Pluckley* in *Kent*.

themselves; and that self-condemnation will be sufficient to make them serious. The time may come when it shall be improved, by the grace of God, into true conversion.

On these considerations, I persuade myself, you will attend to me, while I proceed to shew you,

First, what sort of person we are to understand by the *fool*, who is here said to *mock at sin.*

Secondly, on what principles *favour* is shewn to sinners by the *righteous.*

After which I shall make some remarks, and add such advice as shall arise from the subject.

First then, the *fool* here meant does not signify a person so weak in reason, as to be void of common sense and understanding: but one, who being without a sense of religion, has no consistent rule of action, no proper considerations to him; and is therefore given up to the follies of pride, vanity, selfishness, and all those other evil passions, by which the men of this world are commonly agitated: and a dreadful character it is: the harmless driveller, who can scarcely distinguish between fire and water, is a prince, when compared with a person whose delight is in mischief, and whose wickedness has made a fool of him. The one knows little about

about men; the other knows nothing about God; and the latter sort of ignorance is by far the most deplorable.

Amongst all his ill qualities, his disposition to mockery is what we are at present chiefly concerned with. Being evil himself he is disposed to make the worst of all mankind, that he may reduce them to his own level. Let a man be never so bad, yet he will invent some way or other to keep up, in his own mind, a tolerable opinion of himself; and as he cannot make himself good, he must make others evil. Thus, though he is still no better than before, yet he seems not quite so bad, if others are no better than he. When he finds any sin in others, he triumphs in the discovery; as if his favourite maxim were exemplified, that all men are as wicked as himself: and where he cannot find sin, he supposes it. Virtue (with him) is not what it seems to be; and all apparent goodness has so much art and hypocrisy underneath it, that he pronounces all men alike at the bottom. But this of supposing evil does not quite satisfy him; he is never happy till he finds some appearance of it; and when he has found it, he makes the most of it, exposing every fault to the utmost of his ability. As to wit, such a person generally employs what he hath

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in rendering other people odious and contemptible. His business is to condemn, even though his ill-natured reflections return with double force against himself: for it is no uncommon thing with bad men, to censure unmercifully that very offence, which is much more notorious in themselves: if they can hurt others, they care not how they disgrace themselves at the same time.

This of mocking at sin is the property of the worst of men; who think they have no other way of covering themselves, and escaping the censures they justly merit: and thus far mockery is a work of convenience. But in some tempers, where envy and hatred prevail, it is also a work of inclination. There are some natures which take pleasure in railing and defamation; as there are animals in the creation which feed themselves upon the sores of others; if there were no carcases they would be starved to death; and if there were no ill reports to be propagated, some people would have little or nothing to say: for what is all that scandal with which vain talkers amuse one another but mockery at sin? This is the life of their conversation: and if we could suppose the world at once to become prudent and virtuous, such persons would be struck dumb.

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As this mockery is the sign of a bad disposition, it is also an argument of a weak understanding. It requires judgment to distinguish excellence, and to give praise where it is justly due; while very little knowledge is necessary to discover what is amiss: and there is in all men living something either of offence or infirmity, for a malicious mind to fix upon; something that is evil, or something that may be interpreted into evil. What is light and worthless floats upon the surface, like scum and straws, which every eye can find out; but what is valuable, is concealed by its weight, and cannot be discovered without some penetration: therefore we always see the shallowest people most addicted to censure: so that in short, mockery, according to the terms of our text, is the proper employment of fools; and mockery at sin, being the most ill-judged mockery in the world, is a sign of the greatest folly.

If we would see how compleatly odious this practice is, we must take some examples of it: for vice never appears to be what it is, till we consider it in a vicious person. When the Israelites fell into sin, and were afflicted for it at home, or sent away into captivity abroad; the cruel heathens, who hated them for their religion,

gion, never failed to rejoice at their fall, and mock at their calamity; like the savage Moors on the coast of Barbary, who were heard to express themselves by shouts of laughter, when poor Christian people slipt into the sea and were drowned, as they were escaping from a wreck to the shore in a storm. When David, who had shone as a warrior, a prince, a saint, and a prophet, was drawn away by his lust at an unhappy hour into adultery and murder, the drunkards made songs to turn him into ridicule; and the *enemies of the Lord* made use of his fall as an occasion to *blaspheme* the religion he professed. The Scribes and Pharisees, the greatest of all sinners, because they added a sanctified hypocrisy to their wickedness, were always ready to seize the opportunity of blackening other people, and of deriding the wisdom even of Christ himself. When a woman was taken in the act of adultery, they were not only clamourous against her, insisting upon her condemnation; but they made use of her crime as a snare upon the mercy of our Redeemer; who they supposed would be ready to pardon her offence, and give them an opportunity of accusing him for not observing the laws of Moses. None were ever more busy than these hypocrites in bringing sin to light; not through

through any hatred against sin, or any zeal to the glory of God, but for some malicious purpose; either to make themselves appear better than they were; or with a view to some farther accusation against those who were better than themselves.

So odious is this vice of mockery against sin, that satan himself is distinguished by it; who is never so much a devil, as when he is employed in accusing the brethren; insomuch that the word *devil*, in the original Greek, signifies *an accuser*. He first tempts men to sin; then ridicules them for their folly, and accuses them to God for their offences. Half his employment consists in treasuring up all the evil he can find in the best men, that he may have it to plead against them in the day of judgment. No faith, no virtue, no charity, no truth, no devotion, will ever charm that deaf adder into a good opinion of any one saint upon earth; but their failings, their infirmities, their omissions, their mistakes, are the objects of all his attention and vigilance: and if that evil spirit, whose portion is everlasting torment, can be capable of any delight, it is at the fall of godliness, at the ruin of virtue, at the approach of religion, at the apostacy of a believer.

We have very lately had an opportunity of observing

observing the conduct of different persons, in respect to the unhappy case of a well known divine *, now under disgrace and conviction for an offence which is capital by the laws of this country. As I have passed along the streets of our great city, I have heard him scoffed at, by the vilest of the people, in profane songs and ballads; his profession insulted, and christianity itself set at nought for his miscarriage; while the wise, and the virtuous, and the pious have been sighing over him in secret, recommending him to God's mercy in their closets, or lamenting his fall in their conversation: and indeed, multitudes of people have seemed so affected with his case, from the consideration of his function and character, that there must, on the whole, be more piety and less malice than we should expect to find in an age so given up to vice and dissipation.

From hence let us proceed to the second, and the more agreeable part of our subject; which leads us to consider, on what principles, *favour* is shewn to sin by the *righteous*. By the *righteous*, those persons are signified who are what we call good men in opposition to the wicked. They have a proper sense of religion: their thoughts are in subjection to the rules of

* The late unfortunate Dr. DODD.

the divine law, and their passions are softened by devotion. Such people can be no *friends to sin;* and yet it is true, that sin finds more favour with them than the worst of sinners. But what is this favour? It is not here to be understood, that the righteous are possessed by a mean spirit, which excuses, and makes light of, all the evil it meets with; as some are wont to do, who set up for charitable persons, and court the favour of the public by giving every worthless man a good character. He is a false-hearted physician, who leaves the patient insensible of his illness, and tells him he has nothing to fear from the worst distemper to which mortals are subject. Such mistaken favour as this proceeds either from weakness or artifice. He, who finds no faults, can give no praises; because he has destroyed the proper distinction between good and evil. The favour of the righteous is quite of another sort; it is not a symptom of folly, but of wisdom: and it reasons thus: that as sin is in itself the greatest calamity, and the cause of all other calamities there are in the world, it is as cruel and absurd to mock at a man for his sin, as it would be to mock at him for a leprous body, or a broken limb. Sometimes the very appearances of sin are lamentable to a compassionate man; but,

but, to a religious man, the consequences are always so. The ruin of innocence, the loss of a good conscience, the misapplication of a good understanding, the forfeiture of God's protection, disappointment and misery in this world, and the fearful looking-for of judgment in the next, are dreadful considerations, which a righteous man can never separate from the notion of sin. However fair and flattering it may look for a time, (as many fatal diseases have but light symptoms in the beginning,) these are the proper issues of it at last. How many thousands of young men, through the deceitfulness of sin, and thoughtlessness of youth, having yielded to the first temptations and beginnings of sin, have been drawn by an easy progress from idleness to pleasure, from pleasure to extravagance, from extravagance to vice, from vice to beggary, from beggary to dishonesty, and from dishonesty to infamy and despair! How many unfortunate young women, too little aware of their own danger, have been seduced from their natural modesty, into shame and disappointment; lost and forsaken in this world, neglected by all honest people, despised very probably and avoided by those who seduced them, and dragging on a miserable life in poverty and infamy; who might

have lived innocent and useful and happy, if they had duly considered the nature of sin, before they had resigned themselves to a sinful life! What the sword and famine and pestilence are to a nation, such is sin to a single person. All the havock that is made in the mind, the body, or the fortune, proceeds in some shape or other from this universal cause of evil: there is no one calamity incident to the nature of man, which sin cannot, indeed, which it doth not naturally, produce. Therefore the righteous man considers the sinner as a person taken in a snare, or fallen into a pit, or maimed in all his faculties by the cruel adversary of mankind. Instead of despising him, he grieves for him. He finds him in the same miserable condition with that poor traveller in the parable of the Gospel, who in his way from Jerusalem to Jericho fell among thieves, which left him naked, and wounded, and half dead upon the ground. Who can mock at such a spectacle as this? He only, who either has no sense or no feeling: whose understanding is darkened, and whose heart is hardened: yet this is the real inward condition of a sinner; therefore the righteous man takes the part of the good Samaritan; he sees him and has compassion on him; he raises him, from the earth

to

to which he is fallen, and pours balm into his wounds. What a pleasure would a generous mind take in releasing a poor wretch bound hand and foot by thieves, and left to perish in the field! How happy is the good man in the opportunity of redeeming a poor Christian slave, who has been chained to the oar, and beaten by unfeeling Turkish tyrants! Such is the satisfaction we ought to take in restoring a sinner to his liberty. All men are entitled to this pity from us by the common ties of humanity: the effects of sin are to be deplored even in Heathens, Jews, and Savages: but Christians have a nearer claim upon us, as members of the same body, in which we are all to rejoice and suffer together. The righteous therefore instead of triumphing in the sin of his neighbour, and aggravating his fault, is ready to offer any thing that can be said in the way of extenuation: that the sinner might offend through ignorance; that if he had known better, he would have done better; that he might be surprized into sin in an unguarded hour by the sudden violence of some temptation. Charity hopeth all things that are good, and believeth all things that are favourable. And, to conclude these observations, as the fool in mocking at sin imitates the devil, the righteous

in shewing favour follows the example of Jesus Christ, who was even reflected upon for his condescension as the *friend of publicans and sinners*. But here we must be careful to urge the example of our blessed Saviour so far only as it will go. The malice of the hypocrite, and the sins of the impenitent, were the objects of his compassion, and even of his tears; but sin is no object of *pardon*, till it is confessed and repented of. We are commanded to pray for those that revile us and use us despitefully! but God himself is not faithful and just to forgive us our sins, till they are confessed by the penitent. Christ wept over Jerusalem for the calamities which its apostacy should bring upon it, and devoutly wished it might have seen the things which belonged to its peace; but he pardoned sin in those only who wept for themselves; and none of this temper were ever cast out, when they applied to him.

I am now lastly to add some advice proper to the subject.

The doctrine we have heard is this; that the righteous is favourable, and the fool is censorious. Let us therefore be careful not to mistake that mockery for wit, which is the greatest instance of folly. To mock at the evil or the shame of sin in those who are guilty of it, is the height

height of cruelty and malice; it is inhuman; it is more like an undistinguished brute, than one who is indued with the tender feelings of a rational man: and to mock at sin itself, as if there were no harm in it, is the way to let sin loose upon us: it saves trouble to the tempter, by taking off those restraints of religion and virtue which stand in his way. No words can make sin so horrible as it really is. It ruins individuals every day, in mind, body and estate; and there is a time when it shall destroy the world, as certainly as the fire of the last day shall consume it. If he, that trifles with fire, is accounted a mad man, what must he be, who makes a mock at sin? For when fire and sword, and famine and pestilence, are laying waste the world, sin is the spring which puts them all in motion.

Mockery, being an act of pride as well as folly, is very dangerous to those who practise it; because *pride goeth before a fall*; and he, that mocks at sin, is never far from falling into it. The offence is such as ought to be in justice, and generally is, punished with subsequent disgrace and humiliation. He, that mocketh at others, shall be mocked at himself. We are warned not to be *high minded*, but to *fear*. When the wise man sees another fall, he is im-

mediately in fear for himself, knowing that we are all compassed with the same infirmities, and that he himself may come to want that favour which he refuses to another. If he is told of any unhappy person, whom sin hath destroyed or betrayed, he has reason to bless God, that he himself was not made an example to that man, who is now made an example to him. And let me tell you, that no man can be in a safe condition, but he who thus judges of himself. Where there is great danger, there is no safety but in great fear; therefore the Christian is exhorted to leave mockery and levity to the giddy, thoughtless people of this world, who see not the danger of their own situation; and to work out his own salvation *with fear and trembling*.

But of all the considerations which occur on our present subject, this is the most alarming; that they, who make sin the object of their mockery, incur the danger of being themselves cast off with scorn by Almighty God in the great day of retribution. There is an hour of distress, when such *shall call upon God, and he will not answer; he shall laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh.* Can we conceive any thing so dreadful, as to be mocked at by him, who is armed with all the instruments

instruments of vengeance? Of whom it is written, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.* The day is approaching, when we shall each of us be stretched upon our beds in a dying condition: and then the sins of our past life will present themselves to our imagination: so that while the body is sinking with weakness, the mind perhaps shall be overpowered with sorrow and amazement. Then, what will become of the unmerciful! How shall that tongue dare to ask forgiveness, which delighted in accusation and mockery? How shall those hands be lifted up for mercy, which never knew how to spare?

That we may not fall into this fearful state, let us now provide against it in time: let us be serious to consider the danger of sin; humble, to confess our own infirmities; charitable, to extenuate and overlook the miscarriages of others: then, instead of fearing the threatenings, we may hope in the promises of God, especially in this; *Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.*

SERMON

SERMON XII.

NOW ABIDETH FAITH, HOPE, CHARITY, THESE THREE; BUT THE GREATEST OF THESE IS CHARITY. 1 COR. xiii. 13.

THESE three virtues support the Christian life, as the elements support the world. No religion but the Christian did ever teach mankind any one of these virtues: they are all peculiar to the Gospel: and so the Apostle intimates by calling them *these three;* joining them together as the three elements of the Christian system, none of which ever were or could be found in any other. When he compares them, he gives the preference to *Charity;* and with good reason; as you will see, when you have considered *what* it is. To describe it in as few words as possible, it signifies *the friendship of Christians;* the love we ought to have for *the brethren;*

brethren; that is, for the church and all its members, for the sake of Christ. It is the virtue which binds Christians to one another upon earth, and shall unite them for ever in heaven: it proves us to be true disciples of Christ in the eyes of the world; and it recommends us to God, because it brings us to a nearer resemblance with himself; for *God is love* *.

To understand this virtue rightly, we must know whence it proceeds, and how it is to be attained. This may be gathered from the text; where the Apostle hath placed the three great virtues of a Christian in their natural order. The first of them is *Faith*; the second is *Hope*; and the last is *Charity*. Hope arises from Faith, and Charity from Faith and Hope. Where there is no Faith, there can be no Hope; and where there is neither Faith nor Hope, there can be no Charity.

This is what I shall endeavour to prove in the following discourse; and to correct a common mistake concerning the nature of Charity, so far as the time will permit.

If we enquire into the nature of Faith, we shall find, that it is a kind of *Spiritual Sense*, without which we cannot receive the Christian doctrines,

* 1 John iv. 8.

doctrines, nor believe the promises of God. It is that kind of apprehension, with which we admit things *not yet seen:* and as the word of God treats chiefly of *such* things, Faith is the faculty with which we receive the word of God; if we receive it at all. *By Faith*, says the Apostle, *we know that the worlds were framed by the word of God, and that the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.* We should not so much as know that God *created* the world, unless he himself had informed us of it: and so weak is human reason without Faith, that some, who pretend to be wiser than all other men, do not believe this after they have been told of it. The general object of our Faith is the word of God, as revealed to us in the scripture; the more particular object of it is the redemption of man by Jesus Christ, as it includes the whole work of our regeneration and final salvation. Till we admit of this, and of the nature of the person, both God and man, by whom it is accomplished, we have no Faith. St. John reduces Faith to this single article of *receiving the record God hath given of his son.* He that believeth not God, saith he, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his son: and this is the record, that God

God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his son. So that to believe in God, according to the terms of the gospel, is to believe in his son Jesus Christ; who, as the promised seed, the Conqueror of the serpent, and the Redeemer of the world, has been the object of Faith to all believers from the beginning of the world. By virtue of this Faith, Abel offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain. Cain brought of the *fruits of the earth*; Abel brought a sacrifice, and shed the *blood* of it; confessing thereby, as a true believer, that *without shedding of blood* there was *no remission* of sin. All the saints of old time obtained a good report on the same principle: they believed that man is fallen, and must be redeemed by a saviour; that this life is a pilgrimage; and that there is an heavenly inheritance, which the saints shall possess after the resurrection from the dead. Such was their faith, and such is ours; and, when we have it, it is our defence against all the assaults of our spiritual enemies: "Above all (saith the "Apostle) taking the *shield of faith*, wherewith "ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts "of the wicked." Faith has an answer to all temptations, a solution of all difficulties; and we may now add farther concerning it, that it

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is the only introduction to the virtue of *Hope*. The heart may as well be supposed to have gladness in it without having life, as the Christian can be supposed to have Hope without having Faith. For *Faith*, as the scripture declares, *is the substance of things hoped for*: which means literally, that Faith is the groundwork or foundation of Hope. This, therefore, is now, in its proper place, to be considered.

When the root of Faith is once planted in the heart, Hope will naturally grow out of it. The word of God is a seed, which, by the operation and power of divine grace, will be unfolded, and yield its fruits. Of these Hope is the first: for when Faith has received the promises, Hope will rejoice in the expectation of their accomplishment. Faith informs us, that Christ is risen from the dead: Hope learns from thence, that he is the *first fruits* of an *harvest*, and that all the sheaves of the field shall follow him. Faith tells us, that he is seated at the right hand of God: Hope infers, that he is gone there to prepare a place for *us*. Faith knows, that he shall return to judge the world: Hope is assured, that *his reward is with him*: in a word, Hope expects what Faith promises; and therefore, where there is no faith, there can be no hope: so that it is better not to be born, than

not

not to be a Christian. Such as the world would be, without the light of the sun, to gild and adorn the objects of the creation, such is the life of man without the hope of a Christian. To the unbeliever all things are dark and dismal: pleasure is worthless, and pain is insupportable. How miserable would be the condition of the sailor, when he is traversing the wide ocean, if he had no hope of reaching the desired haven! It is this expectation, which supports him under the dangers of the storm, and the labours and sufferings of a tedious voyage. And every Christian is supported on the same principle: he looks forward to the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul; and the faculty, or passion of the mind, with which he looks forward, is no other than Hope. Faith accepts the means of salvation, and Hope looks to the end of it. The object of a Christian's hope is the appearance of Christ in glory, to dispel the shades of death, and put his disciples in actual possession of the promised inheritance. At present a cloud has received him out of our sight; but we know, that other clouds shall restore him to us; and that, when he appears the second time, he will appear without sin unto salvation. We see the blessed Apostle St. Paul so animated with this hope, that he triumphed

triumphed over the afflictions and sufferings, under which an ordinary man, with the greatest human fortitude, must have sunk; we hear him even uttering praises to God, that he had the honour to suffer for the name of Christ: and, when the time of his martyrdom was approaching, "I am now, says he, ready to be offered, "and the time of my departure is at hand. I have "fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I "have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid "up for me a crown of righteousness, which "the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me "at that day." There is a day approaching, when all they, who suffer from unrighteous judges upon earth, shall be tried and rewarded by a righteous judge from heaven: and this hope is an anchor to the soul, which keeps it steady to its profession in life and in death; even when the winds rage, and the waves beat, and the deep threatens to swallow it up in destruction. While their body is confined to the objects of sense, and circumscribed by this lower world, their thoughts enter *within the veil* to survey and enjoy the heavenly things there laid up in store for them. This glorious light, which is presented to the imagination of every believer, was realized to the senses of the blessed St. Stephen. When the Jews

gnashed

gnashed upon him with their teeth, and were prepared to stone him to death, he, being full of the holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and said, "Behold, I see the heavens "opened, and Jesus standing at the right "hand of God." This happened for an assurance to that noble army of martyrs, who were afterwards to suffer in the same cause: the very name of *Stephen*, the first of martyrs, expresses the reward of those who were to suffer after his example: it signifies a *crown*. From St. Paul and St. Stephen we may understand the nature and efficacy of Christian hope; which they, who love the appearing of our blessed Saviour as much as these disciples did, may experience in the same degree. But such hope must be founded upon faith: it is never to be attained on any other condition. St. *Paul* had *kept the Faith*; otherwise he would not have rejoiced at the approach of death. The martyr, Stephen, was first *full of faith*; without which he had never beheld the heavens opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

Through faith and hope, thus depending on

each other, we are led to the consideration of *charity*; the third and greatest of the Christian virtues.

The word, which we translate charity in the new testament, is *love*; and, according to the Apostle's description of it, it means that brotherly love and affection, that spirit of peace, unity, and benevolence, which is the life and soul of the Christian society.

There are two mistakes in regard to the nature of charity, which are so current amongst us, that it is necessary to remove them, before the nature of this virtue can be understood by a modern audience.

Some think that charity consists entirely in giving money to the poor: but in this they are greatly mistaken. Almsgiving is a branch, and a necessary branch, of charity; but it is no more; and very often it is not so much; for many are bountiful, who are not charitable; and many are charitable, who have it not in their power to be bountiful. *Though I give all my goods to feed the poor*, saith St. Paul, and *have not charity, I am nothing*. It is therefore possible to give every thing to the poor, and still to have no charity. And it is possible for a Christian to be very charitable, who has nothing more

more to give than a cup of cold water; because he gives it upon a right principle. Charity, therefore, is something more sublime than the bare giving of money, or feeding of the poor: if this were all, what must they do, who have no money to give? Yet the poorest Christian must have charity, if he hopes to be saved.

There is a second mistake concerning charity, which deceives many. Charity, according to a fashionable opinion of it, is a virtue which finds excuses for those who depart from the doctrines and worship of the Christian church. Such charity makes light of all differences among Christians; it can sit by quietly, and see the church of Christ converted into a Babel of confusion; pretending, that morality, like that of sober heathens, is all that gives excellence to Christianity; and that, if the moral precepts be secured, it matters not what becomes of creeds, articles, and sacraments. But, my brethren, that is a poor sort of charity, which knows nothing more than to find excuses for the breach of charity, and thinks itself authorised to publish *indulgences* for errors, which are destructive to men's souls: nor is that charity any better, which, while it feeds the poor, can delight itself in a proud, pharisaical singularity,

and look with contempt and hatred upon pious Christians, because they set a proper value upon orthodoxy and uniformity. All this will appear to you, if you listen to the instruction of the Apostle, and learn from thence what charity really is.

Upon occasion of some divisions and disturbances, which had arisen in the church of Corinth, from some who were proud of their spiritual gifts, and had set themselves up in opposition to their brethren; the Apostle teaches them, that whatever differences there might be in their qualifications, they were all to be animated by the same spirit, and to behave themselves peaceably, as members of the same body. That it was as unnatural for Christians, who had but one communion, to divide themselves into parties, as for the members of the body to oppose one another, and follow separate interests not consistent with the unity of the whole. That no superior knowledge of the Gospel, no miraculous gifts, no qualification whatsoever, would warrant any man to make a division in the body of Christ. This is the subject of the 12th chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians; as you will understand, if you read it with attention. Thence the Apostle proceeds to describe charity, in the 13th chapter,

ter, from the last verse of which I have taken the words of the text: and he recommends this virtue to them, as superior to all gifts and endowments: for all faith and all knowledge were intended as introductory to this virtue. All knowledge is given to Christians, to keep them together in one body, not to be a pretence for dividing themselves into parties: their knowledge is then worth nothing, because it does not answer its chief purpose: for peace and unity, the objects of it, are so far superior, that they shall be perfected in heaven, when all prophecy, all preaching, all the knowledge we now have, shall be at an end.

Charity then is that principle of love and friendship, which preserves the unity of the Christian society, and binds Christians to Christ and to one another, as members of his mystical body: it unites upon earth those who are to be united in heaven; and therefore it must be the constant endeavour of every true Christian to promote it by every method in his power; by his words and his works; his conversation and example. *By this*, said our blessed Saviour, *shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* Love is the mark, by which his disciples are to be distinguished from other men: nay, the words

of Christ inform us, that the unity of his church is the proof of his divine mission, and the great testimony to the truth of his religion— *That they all may be one* (says he) *as thou, father, art in me and I in thee; that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.* And such was the unity and affection of Christians in the primitive times, that it moved the admiration of heathens, who were heard to say, *Behold, how these Christians love one another!* If the same people were to see the multiplied divisions of the present times, and to hear the trifling reasons and vain conceits on which they are grounded, and by which they are defended; they might then say, *Behold, how these Christians hate one another!*

After what hath been said, you will easily be persuaded, that there can be no charity without faith and hope: indeed it is an absurdity to suppose it: there might as well be a Christian without Christianity. Charity is the end, faith and hope are but the means that lead to it: the *end* of the commandment is *charity:* all doctrines, all precepts, all revelations are given, to build up this divine principle in the heart.

So far as charity is the gift of God to us, it arises

arises necessarily from the nature and conditions of the Christian religion; where unity is so conspicuous in all its rites and doctrines. We have *one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one spirit* to animate us; *one hope* of our calling: and, in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, we all partake of *one bread,* and thereby become *one body.* Thus we are called to unity and love, by all the terms of our faith and worship. God hath made us one, as members of his Church: and so far charity is his gift. How it is to be preserved, we are taught at large in the chapter from whence the text is taken. There it appears, that Christians, who are called to a state of unity, are to keep themselves in it, by kindness and long suffering; by bearing with one another's imperfections and weaknesses; by putting away all envy and opposition, all that carnal vanity, which makes us desire to be distinguished in the sight of men, rather than in the favour of God; by bearing with things that may be disagreeable to us; hoping that things are not so bad as they may seem; and that what is bad will be better; by lamenting the offences of our brethren; not rejoicing at their miscarriages: in short, by serving others and reducing ourselves: for thus did the son of man

come to take upon him the form of a *servant*, and to *minister* to the wants of all, rather than to be magnified and ministered to by any. He, who can follow this example, will be a charitable man, and shall inherit the rewards of charity, in that blessed place from whence it cometh. His faith may remove mountains; his hope may lift him above the world; but his charity alone will carry him to heaven.

SERMON

SERMON XIII.

MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED THE HOUSE OF PRAYER. MATTH. XXI. 13.

ABOUT four hundred years ago, when the corruptions of Popery had overspread this kingdom, and were become insupportable, the office of preaching was almost totally neglected in country parishes: and there were indeed but few of the clergy who were qualified to preach, so that the ministerial duty was reduced in a manner to the offices of baptizing, confessing, praying and administering the sacrifice of the mass. Such gross errors were mixed with the doctrines of the church, and so many abuses were practised in the discipline of that time to supply the avarice of the bishop of Rome, and

and render the priesthood at home a more profitable trade, that it was thought more adviseable to keep the common people in ignorance; who were therefore but meanly provided with preachers. But when the eyes of men began to be opened by the remonstrances of the Reformers, the clergy themselves became sensible of the defect, and preaching was again in fashion. As the people grew more enlightened, their inclination to preaching increased, and the clergy found it their interest, as well as their duty, to gratify it, and to adorn their preaching with a proper degree of learning and eloquence.

But such is the weakness of mankind, that they are always prone to correct one error by running into another. Religion, which in one age had little or no preaching, in the next had scarcely any thing else. Men of seditious inclinations, who were poisoned with foreign prejudices, took advantage of this humour of the people to inflame them against their governors, and turn their hearts from the apostolical constitution of the Church. In the days of Elizabeth, this spirit wrought furiously, but was kept under by authority, and prevented at that time from doing the mischief it meditated. In the next reign, it was reasoning and plotting, but

but the nation was not enough prepared till the days of Charles the First; when the combustible materials, which had been gradually introduced, and laid up in store for many years past, by artful and insinuating preachers, took fire at last, and spread a flame over the land, which devoured both Church and State, and was visible to all the western parts of Christendom. Then there was nothing but preaching. The ears of all orders of men, from the highest to the lowest, were filled with it. When one preacher had finished his sermon, another got up into the same pulpit, and then another; so that on great days there was no intermission from morning till night. The people, however, awaking at length from the delusion which had seized upon them, and feeling the misery and oppression with which they had been loaded by their new masters, were surfeited with that preaching which had deceived their understandings, and driven them upon their own ruin, instead of leading them to true Christian godliness. They discovered that there was a great difference betwixt *walking with God*, and *talking* with him: the former was the profession of their leaders, but the latter was their practice; and the freedom and sauciness of their language was often but

little short of blasphemy. When there was no preaching, superstition and corruption prevailed; when there was overmuch, it was of a flatulent and inflammatory kind; and it appeared at length so ridiculous, that the style and manner of it was purposely avoided after the Restoration by most men who were regularly educated. But alas! when they did this, they fell into another error, under which we are now suffering. The spirit of prayer and of Christian godliness, having exposed itself in the intemperate and hypocritical effusions of fanatic zeal, was now more coldly affected, and preachers were shy of betraying any symptoms of religious warmth, lest they should be suspected for hypocrites. Interpretations of the scripture had been made so cheap, and had been so ill managed, that they had given great disgust. The preachers of the former time had made an ostentatious shew of understanding all *mysteries*. They could find the Pope's errors and their own fancies any where in the minor prophets; and could tell you the mystical intention of the snuffers and fire-shovels * of the tabernacle. This evil was corrected by what was called *moral preaching*; and unfortunately

* The celebrated *John Bunyan* wrote a Mystical Exposition of every article in Solomon's Temple.

tunately for the times, a generation of metaphysicians arose, who gave a new turn to the thoughts of Christian scholars, and furnished them with dry, speculative, unprofitable, and sometimes very dangerous matter. The Old Testament, with which the Puritans had held such ridiculous familiarity, came to be much neglected, and of course much misunderstood; of which I could give some frightful examples from writers of high reputation. Where this happens, the New Testament can never long maintain its authority; and we are all witnesses, that the neglect of its doctrines by our preachers has offended the common people, and laid them open to the attempts of mercenary enthusiasts, who preach without discretion, and act without authority. Our Dissenters also are, in general, much departed from their original profession, and, in their discourses, preached and printed, some of them approach nearer to the cold philosophy of Bolingbroke, and the wildness of Voltaire, than to the faith and language of their forefathers: and this I would tell them, not out of any ill-will, but that they may consider from whence they have departed, and learn, that soundness of teaching is always brought into great danger, when

when we affect separate ways of worship. The duty of a Christian minister requires him therefore to know and to avoid all these dangers; to keep up the knowledge of Christian doctrine in the people, by the light of his preaching; and to warn them at all times of the necessity of praying. We may preach again and again; but unless we can preach till we make men pray, it is all to no purpose. Be ye *doers* of the word, says the Apostle, and *not hearers only*. But how are we to *do* it? Hearing only shews us what it is; the grace of God enables us to perform it; and that grace is never to be obtained, but by prayer. St. *Paul* saw a great light from the heaven which struck him and his companions to the earth; and he heard the voice of Christ himself speaking to him: then he went blind to Damascus, and remained for some time in this dreadful state of suspense, under the hand of God. All this train of miracles was designed only to turn his heart, and bring him to his prayers: and the means, with such an heart to work upon, had the proper effect. Upon which, Ananias received a commission to go and relieve him—

The Lord said to him, in a vision—

"Arise, and go into the street, which is called

"straight,

" straight, (strait) and inquire in the house " of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus, for " behold, *he prayeth.*"

The importance and excellence of prayer may be collected from the words of the text; which do not relate to the duty of private devotion, however necessary, but to public prayer only. The house of God does not take its name from the practice of preaching there, but from the practice of praying.—*My house shall be called the House of Prayer.* Accordingly we find, that when the temple of Solomon was finished, it was immediately applied to its proper use. We hear of no preaching on this great occasion, but only of prayers and religious offerings. The king, the priests, and all the people attended at the solemn service of its dedication. Sacrifices were offered without number, and the king, in his capacity of a prophet, prayed publicly for the blessing and favour of God upon the house which he had built. His words are very striking, and a part of them will furnish an excellent commentary upon the text. *Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have builded? Yet have thou respect*

respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and unto the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee this day. That thine eyes may be opened towards this house night and day; even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there; that thou mayst hearken to the prayer which thy servant shall make towards this place. And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray towards this place, and hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling place, and, when thou hearest, forgive. In this part of king Solomon's prayer, these things following are to be observed; 1st. That the temple was an habitation of God; a circumstance which the piety of the king dwells upon with wonder—*will God indeed dwell on earth!* The cloud, which denoted the presence of God, had already filled the house, so that the Priest could not stand to minister: and in the ages after, as well as before, the divine presence was manifested about the ark, and between the cherubims which overshadowed it. On special occasions it appeared in a visible manner, under the symbol of a cloud with a light or glory attending it; and, when the cloud was

was not seen, the place was always understood as being inhabited in a particular manner by the glory of the God-head.

In the words that follow, the use of the temple is signified—*have thou respect unto the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee this day.* This house was the place, where God would give audience, and have respect to the petition, out of regard to the place in which it was offered. They, who expect to be heard, when they address a king, go into his court, and present themselves in the proper place for an audience. The temple is the court of the great King; and though he can hear the voice of men in every place, yet it was expedient, that one place should be honoured above all others, to stir up reverence in men, and give them a reasonable ground of hope, when they should offer their petitions. It seems by the expression, that the people were encouraged not only to pray within the temple, but to have respect to it, and turn themselves toward it in their devotions, even when they prayed to the God of Israel in distant places—*Hearken to the supplication of thy people Israel, when they shall pray* towards *this place.* And the practice was duly observed by Daniel in his captivity at Babylon; it was his manner to open

his window toward Jerusalem, and to kneel, and pray three times a day. His respect was to the temple; and he held to the practice, though there was then no more than the ruins of it remaining. In fact, the tabernacle and temple were the places, where the devotion of the people and the favour of God met together; the house of God was the common assembly of heaven and earth; there God was to be found, and there the people sought him, there *Hannah*, in the bitterness of her soul, offered up her devotions, and her petition was granted. Yea and Christ himself allows, that *the Temple sanctified the gold* which was offered in it; and, if it could sanctify gold, it would rather sanctify the more valuable offerings of prayer and thanksgiving. This was known to that godly woman *Anna*, the prophetess, who, having devoted herself to God, departed not from the temple, but served him there with fastings and prayers night and day. It is not said, that she ran gossipping after sermons, but that she served God with prayers. There the prayers of *Simeon* were granted, and the promise of God fulfilled to him, when he took up the child Jesus in his arms, and blessed God, who in his temple had indulged him with a sight of what his eyes had most desired to behold.

But

But it is particularly worth our notice, that private devotion seems to have met with the regard of heaven on account of its connection with the services of the temple. It appears from the scripture, that there were settled hours of prayer, when the people resorted to public worship; such as the third hour of the day, the sixth hour or noontide, the ninth hour, which answered to our three o'clock in the afternoon, and the sun setting, when they offered the evening sacrifice. These hours were preferred as the best for private devotion, that the prayer of the closet might be the prayer of charity and uniformity, and ascend to God with the incense of the church. Peter went up to the house-top to pray at *the sixth hour*, one of the seasons of public devotion at the temple. The prayer of *Cornelius* was answered by a vision from heaven at the *ninth* hour. Daniel confessed his sin and presented his supplication before the Lord about the *time of the evening oblation*, and was then favoured with a revelation from the Angel *Gabriel:* and lastly, on occasion of that great contest of Elijah with the worshippers of Baal, we read, that the prophet waited from the morning till *the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice*, and then put up the prayer which brought down fire from

heaven, and determined the dispute. 1 Kings 18. 36.

These examples shew us plainly, that both God and man have had regard to stated hours of prayer; and that private prayer was most acceptable, when it agreed with the services of the church. In the primitive ages of Christianity, certain *hours* of the day and night were set apart for public and private devotion, that the people of God might be *upon their knees together*, whether in the church or in their own families: and there are still extant the forms of devotion anciently adapted to the hours of prayer, which were put into the *Saxon* language eight hundred years ago, and were probably used in *Latin* some hundreds earlier.

If all ages and nations have shewn so much regard to the *places* and the times of public worship, and all this reverence was commanded and encouraged by God himself in his dealings with his people, whether Jews or Christians; we shall be disobedient to God, and contrary to good men of all ages, if we neglect the duty of public worship. It hath pleased God in his wisdom to inspire us with reverence for his name, by hallowing some places and things above others: and if God hath regard to what is so set apart for his own honour,

honour, we must displease him and injure ourselves, if we do not conform to his institutions; none of which were appointed without a view to our advancement in holiness and happiness. For consider the consequence of uniting in public worship. Does it not serve as a principle of unity, to promote charity among Christians, and bind them in affection to one another? Men, who resort to the same place by choice, that they may pray together, will contract an habit of considering themselves as constantly under the eye of God, and as members of the same family; and with such a relation, they cannot lightly offend or speak evil one of another. And will not every place become happier, in proportion as there is less offence and less evil to set men against one another? If the experiment were to be made, I dare be answerable for it, that the happiness of every society would be found to keep equal pace with their devotion. Where there is no prayer, there is no religion; and where there is no religion, there is no peace; but instead of it the blusterings of pride, the cruelty of malice, the oppressiveness of avarice, the rage of blasphemy, slander and evil speaking. When Abraham sojourned in a land where the true God was either unknown or disregarded, he said within

himself, *the fear of God is not in this place;* and accordingly he looked for nothing but injury and violence. Where the public is corrupt, private happiness must always be affected by it; and we know of no remedy for public corruption but public devotion.

There is only one thing farther that need now be observed in behalf of public prayer, which is this; that the devotion of heaven is the devotion of *society*. Angels and saints all join in the adoration of the same Divine Being: there are no monastics, no professors of retirement; but they are all of the same heart and mind, praising God with one voice, and inflaming the rapture of every individual by the powerful union of an infinite multitude. Men united together in great numbers have a powerful influence on one another's passions here upon earth: how much more will the multitudes of immortal spirits in heaven spread abroad the flames of divine love in the hearts of those who shall be blessed with their society! This consideration should draw Christians together; whose chief duty it is now, to join their voices together in charity, and make intercession to God for the forgiveness of their own sins, and of the church and nation to which they belong: that so they may be prepared to meet

meet in heaven, and join in the worship of the church triumphant; where intercession shall be changed to thanksgiving; where there shall be no more sorrow, because there shall be no sin; where the devotion of the day shall not be interrupted by the darkness of the night; and where the God, whom they worship, shall no longer be an invisible object of their faith, but present to their sight in glory everlasting.

Thus far I have endeavoured to justify and recommend the public worship of God. I have warned you of the corruptions of popery on the one hand, and of the error of the sectaries on the other; who in a manner excluded the charitable duties of prayer, to make room for vain and seditious discourses from the pulpit. I have insisted, according to the words of the text, that the house of God is a place intended for the office of *prayer*, the proper employment of poor sinners, who may hear sermons all their lives, but will never find themselves nearer to God, till they know how to taste the pleasures of devotion. All the sacrifices which were offered from the beginning of the world, all the incense of the tabernacle, all the smoke of the altar, did not minister to the work of preaching, but were the vehicles of prayer, intercession, and atonement. Prayer

ever was, and ever will be, the vital part of religion: without it there is no religion; and with it, the person who has only learned his catechism, may, with God's blessing, find his way to heaven, with little or no assistance from sermons. I have likewise observed, that public prayer borrows its efficacy from the *place* in which it is offered; a place separated from common use, and holding communication with heaven itself, the dwelling-place of God; that the servants of God, in all ages, had a reverend esteem for the *place* of divine worship; having regard to it always in the manner and the time of their private devotions: and that God hath shewed special favour to those who applied to him at the appointed *time*; that the great *end* of all these appointments is the edification and happiness of the people of God, who are knit together in charity, by uniting in prayer; that public blessings are the sure reward of public devotion; and that individuals cannot be at peace, unless there is religion in the society to which they belong. Above all, that the devotion of the congregation upon earth is preparatory to the felicity of heaven; and that he must pray with Christians in this vale of tears, who would join in the worship of angels in the sanctuary above. Surely these were the considerations

siderations which possessed the heart of the holy Psalmist, when he uttered those sublime expressions of charity and devotion, the hearing of which is sufficient to warm the coldest heart. *I was glad when they said unto me, we will go into the house of the Lord—Jerusalem is built as a city that is at unity in itself; for thither the tribes go up, even the tribes of the Lord, to testify unto Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord—O pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee—for my brethren and companions' sakes I will wish thee prosperity; yea because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek to do thee good.*

And now, my brethren, give me leave to inform you, that I have chosen this particular subject, because the season of Lent is at hand, and our case is particular. You all know it was my practice, when I came first to this place, to have weekly prayers at the church: but my congregation, which was always small, did at length fall away so, that I was discouraged from proceeding any farther. This was the first accident I had ever met with of the kind since I entered into the ministry; which made it the more grievous to me. However, I will not give up a good cause in despair; and that the

the fault may not lie upon myself, I have determined to speak my mind freely, having some encouragement so to do. You were slack in sending your children to be catechised; but when I spoke to you upon that subject in the church, I found an immediate attention for the better: who knows, but that what I shall now say may be attended with the like happy effect? At least, I am persuaded you will do me the justice to believe, that your benefit is the principal object I have in view. Therefore let us consider the case fairly and impartially. I know the excuse you have to offer for not attending the prayers of the church on *Wednesdays* and *Fridays*—You are *busy*, and have not *time*.—And indeed, I must admit this excuse as sufficient with those whose employment or situation places them at a great distance from the church, and whose families depend upon their daily labour: therefore I must argue the case more particularly with those who are *near the church*. To them I answer, that the time of their attendance is *short*; not much more than half an hour twice in a week; and that this little portion of time cannot occasion any very great interruption in their affairs. Let them ask their own hearts seriously, whether they would not be prevailed upon to spare

twice

twice as much time, on *any* day in the week, upon motives of curiosity or vanity? And is the favour of God so light a matter? Will they always think, that a trifling visit, or an empty sight, is rather to be sought than the pardon of their sins, and the blessing of heaven? Will they think so in the hour of death, or the day of judgment? If they dare not insist upon such excuses then, in the presence of God, why should they depend upon them now?

But let me suppose charitably, that they are persuaded in their own minds, that the *business* of their calling is the *first thing* required of them; that the worship of God ought to give way to it; and that their diligence will turn to a better account than their devotion: if this is their reckoning, they will find on farther consideration, that it is very ill grounded. For man in this life is never independent of God; he doth not work alone; but God worketh with him in every thing that is good and lawful. If he conforms himself to the will of God, his work will be more likely to prosper, than if he consulteth himself only. If the wisdom of the earth is not tempered and regulated by the wisdom of heaven, it will at last find itself disappointed. And however strange this may seem to a man, who at the week's end thinks himself

himself well able to reckon up all the profit of his labour; yet I can tell him of a much stranger thing, which is undoubtedly true upon Christian principles, though it sounds like a contradiction—*He that saveth his life shall lose it*—He that saveth his life against the will of God, shall lose against his own will; or, he shall save for a while the life of his body, and lose for ever the life of his soul. May it not well be said then, *he that saveth his time shall lose it?* He shall be out in his reckoning; his time, by some unforeseen interruptions and miscarriages, shall be rendered less profitable than he expects; or, he shall lose the grace of God by preferring a very inconsiderable reward of a very small portion of his labour: whereas, he, who will bestow some of his time upon God, shall see the remainder sanctified, and find that he has enough and to spare for all other purposes. It is an old proverb that the *wealth honestly gotten goes far;* and it is equally true, that the time which hath God's blessing upon it shall be much increased in its value. Providence hath many ways of disappointing worldly men in their calculations. A fit of sickness may confine them much longer against their will, and much more to the hurt of their temporal affairs, than a regular attendance for several years upon the

the hours of prayer. When the Jews were become carnal, they reasoned as Pharaoh did before; who said, *Ye are idle, ye are idle, therefore ye say, let us go and do service to the Lord our God.* So they argued, that the time spent in divine worship was just so much time lost to themselves and their affairs. But God shewed them the folly of this reasoning: he led them into captivity, where they had no church, but sighed and lamented for the want of one, saying, *how shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?* Their sabbaths and festivals had been neglected on motives of worldly profit: therefore so much time as they had stolen from God, so much and more did he cut off in judgment from the enjoyment of liberty and property in their own land: and I make no doubt but this is the reason why many are not blessed in their property, and find unexpected miscarriages in their affairs; which might have been prevented, had they but *lifted up their eyes unto the hills*, and considered themselves rather as the *servants of God*, than the *masters of their own time.*

I hope you will consider these things, that *the house of God is an house of prayer*— that you may *lose* your time by *saving* it—

and

and that for a little time well spent, you may purchase the blessing of God here, and the riches of eternity hereafter, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON

SERMON XIV.

THEN SAID JESUS UNTO HIS DISCIPLES; IF ANY MAN WILL COME AFTER ME, LET HIM DENY HIMSELF, AND TAKE UP HIS CROSS, AND FOLLOW ME. MATTH. xvi. 24.

OUR blessed Saviour, in these words, hath proposed himself to us, as *the Captain of our Salvation, made perfect through sufferings.* And he, that wishes to *come after* him, must consider himself as the follower of a self-denying, suffering Saviour; a disciple, whose profession is signified by the Sign of the Cross; to which his whole character must be conformed, till the cross shall be exchanged for the crown.

But here you are to observe, that there is no necessity imposed, no compulsion; a proposal is made, which it is in our power to reject, if we

we are so disposed. It is only said, if *any man is willing* *, if he *chuses* to follow Christ, these are the conditions of so doing; he must *deny himself*; he must *take up his cross*. The profession of a Christian is a service of choice: he must not follow Christ, as malefactors follow the officers of justice, because they cannot avoid it; but as one who seeks the rewards and blessings of the Christian profession; and having sat down to consider the cost, determines to take it upon him, with all its present disadvantages. With this spirit and temper Christianity was professed by those saints and martyrs, who *endured unto the end*, and triumphed over all the enemies of their salvation. But now the whole doctrine of self-denial is dismissed with a high hand, as fit only for weak women, solitary monks, or deluded enthusiasts. And, I am sorry to say it, there are too many in the church, who, although they ought to know better, because it is their calling to teach better, are yet so ignorant, or so mistaken, as to congratulate themselves on the established lawfulness of ease, pleasure, and self-indulgence, as a great and very happy improvement of the Protestant Reformation: and they think we are fallen into blessed times, now the calendar of a wise man has no fasting days

* Εἴ τις θέλει.

in it. But this opinion is not only false in itself, injurious to Christianity, and a fatal snare upon Christian people; but contrary also to the common sense of the whole world. I will appeal to all mankind, whether it is not their general practice to suffer pain willingly, for the sake of future profit?—Whether they do not, by their own choice, deny themselves, and part with what they value, to obtain what they hope for? How then can he be thought to have the hope of the gospel in him, who will neither abstain from any present good, nor bear any present evil, for the sake of it? The Christian hath nothing in his power, whereby to testify the sincerity of his hope, but abstinence and patience: and he, who refuses to give this proof, can never be thought to set much value on *the prize of the high calling which is set before him.*

If we observe mankind in their several pursuits, we shall find, that they never seek a prize, without submitting to some hardships in obtaining it. For what they expect in future, they give up present ease and pleasure; and there are few examples, where future enjoyment does not depend upon present self-denial. *He that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things.* The champions, who were candidates for the victory in any trials of skill, prepared

themselves by laborious exercise; abstaining also from every gratification, which might reduce their strength, abate their courage, or lessen their activity; and chearfully exposing themselves to all that severity of discipline, which was necessary to insure the victory. *Now they did it,* as the Apostle notes, *to obtain a corruptible crown*; while we strive to obtain an *incorruptible* one, a crown of glory which *fadeth not away,* as those temporary garlands of herbs and flowers did, which were given to victors in the heathen sports. The merchant leaves his native climate, his relations, his friends, his family, his domestic comforts, to traverse the wide ocean at the hazard of his life; and is content to be scorched with heat in the Indies, or frozen with cold in the northern regions. The soldier, for honour and promotion, endures the fatigues of a campaign, the discipline of a camp, and the dangers of a battle. The heir, who expects an inheritance, accommodates himself, perhaps for many years, to the humours of a capricious and imperious testator. The physician, for reputation and for profit, is hurried abroad by day, and deprived of his rest by night, without leisure to follow his favourite studies, or enjoy the comforts of life; and finds most trouble, when the years, which

which have added to his wisdom and experience, have made him less able to endure the fatigues of his profession. Fair weather is agreeable and delightful: it pleases the eye, and it chears the mind: but the husbandman knows, that perpetual sun-shine must end in poverty, and drought, and famine, and pestilential diseases; and that cloudy days, and weeping skies are absolutely necessary to a plentiful harvest. *He that now goeth on his way weeping, and beareth forth good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him.* The labourer, for his hire, submits to daily confinement; and the scholar, for the enjoyment and advantages of learning, loses his rest, impairs his eye-sight, and injures his health. In a word, all mankind, who are rationally employed, are denying themselves, with the prospect of some future advantage. All the world is doing what some Christians, who think they see farther than the rest, refuse to do; who *professing* themselves *to be wise*, forfeit their title to common sense. The Christian profession would be unlike all others, if its rewards were to be thrown away upon the folly of impatience, the stupidity of idleness, the unprofitableness of pleasure and self-indulgence. As its prize is the richest, it has a right to re-

quire a longer probation of us, and to put us upon a severer trial.

And let me here add, that he who does not deny himself on motives of piety and prudence, shall be no gainer, even according to his own sense of things. It is a poor bargain, by which we gain the pleasures of a swine, and lose the pleasures of a man. Self-indulgence not only unfits a man for every great and useful employment, (as the swine is the most useless creature living); but passions unmortified and headstrong will be sure to create many and great troubles; so that a man's vices shall bring him under a discipline far more severe than that which purifies the heart of a Christian and prepares him for eternity. Think how many are now sick, who might have been well; how many are poor, who might have been rich; how many are dead, who might have been alive; how many are in prison, who might have been as free as we are! to all these the precept in the text—*let him deny himself*—would have acted as a grand preservative, and secured to them their health, their wealth, their life, their liberty. Some of the purest philosophers among the heathens, who saw by experience how great a thing it is for man to be delivered from the fatal effects of his own appetites, called a state

of

of temperance, and self-denial a state of *salvation* *.

How happy is it, therefore, for us, that the duty, which prudence should take up of choice, is imposed upon us of necessity, as we are Christians, that is, followers of Jesus Christ in principle and practice; who, *for the glory that was set before him*, preferred a life of self-denial, which ended in the sufferings of the cross!

Before he entered on the great work of his ministry, he retired into the wilderness, to prepare himself by a fast of forty days. He was there separated from the conversation of his friends, and from the common supports of life; the world, and all its enjoyments, were left behind: the ground was his bed, and the beasts of the desert were his companions. And when hunger prevailed most, after such severe abstinence, he yielded not to the plausible arguments of the Tempter for the supplying of his wants. And, indeed, it was a frequent custom with him to retire into solitary places, by day and by night, to exercise himself in fasting, prayer and holy meditation.

 With

* Οὕτω γαρ μονον ὁ Ἰωσὴφ ΣΩΘΕΙΗ. *Xen.* Memor. Socrat. lib. i. c. 5.

Δειχνυει ποιαν οδον ανθρωπος δει βαδιζειν, ει ΣΩΖΕΣΘΑΙ μελλουσιν ἐν τῳ βιῳ. Cebes in Tabulâ.

With regard to his condition upon earth, he avoided every appearance of greatness, and took upon him the *form of a servant.* He was born in a stable; he laboured in a low occupation; when he provided for the wants of others, he was himself more unprovided than the birds of the air, or the foxes of the earth. The garment, which he chose to wear constantly, was *without seam, woven from the top throughout;* and therefore could admit of nothing that was curious or elegant in the form of it.—And, who was it, that thus made himself of no reputation? It was the son of God, who could not be looked upon by mortal eyes, till he had *emptied himself of his glory.* It was the Creator of the world, who made himself inconsiderable and poor, and possessed nothing in that world, which himself had made. When the Jews would have taken him by force, to make him a king, he concealed himself from their sight; and when the world, with all its grandeur and empire, was offered to him, he renounced it all; preferring the glory of God, and putting off his own exaltation, till the way of self-denial and suffering should lead him up to it.

The sufferings of the Christian are emphatically called in the text, *taking up his Cross.* The Gospel informs us, that this was done by our

our Saviour, in his way to his crucifixion. A circumstance, which shews that his sufferings were voluntary. He took up this burthen, when he might have called for twelve legions of angels; and he submitted freely to all the sorrows which attended it. The Cross was the instrument of his death: but the word includes all the circumstances of sorrow belonging to it. He, who took up his cross, took the pain, the shame, and the grief of it; all the persecution, which preceded, and all the agony, which followed, till the moment in which he gave up the Ghost.

I believe I shall speak a great truth, if I affirm that there never was any kind of pain, mortification, grief, or sorrow, felt by mortal man, in mind, body or spirit, which the Son of God did not feel, at some period of his passion, when he suffered for our sins: he bore *our griefs*, when he was visited for *our iniquities:* all the sorrows of a sinful world were assembled together in his single person; and others were added, which were peculiar to himself—felt by him, but never to be known by us. The sum of his sufferings is an abyss, which we cannot fathom. Men may hear of it, and coldly regard it; but principalities and powers stand abashed at it.

Such was the example set before us by the great Captain of our salvation; who denied himself in his life, and took up the cross at his death; that we, his followers and soldiers, might be encouraged to undertake and endure all the hardships and dangers of our militant state here upon earth. *Let the same mind*, then, *be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus*, who humbled himself, that he might be exalted, and became obedient unto death, that every knee might bow at his name. Take it as we will, the followers of Christ can find no other way to glory and happiness, but this of self-denial and patient suffering.

Our self-denial, as in the case of our blessed Master, must extend to our minds, our bodies, and our estates. In our minds, we are, first, to conform ourselves to the *will* of God; and, secondly, to be obedient to the *law* of God. The hardest of all Christian duties is that of resignation: no trial is like that of contradicting our own stubborn wills. Every man has a plan of his own, in which he has proposed to himself some objects which will make him happy; and without which, he concludes it impossible for him to be so. It pleases God so to order events, as to disappoint him, and force his thoughts into some other channel: then, if he believes that all

all events are directed by God's providence, he will give up his own schemes, and conclude *that* to be best, which God ordains; though it may not at present appear to be so. It is the proper act of faith to look forward to things invisible, and to see future good through present evil. Miserable is the man, who sets up his own will against that power which governs the world, and has promised to make *all things work together for good in the end to those that love him.*

In his body, he is to deny himself by mortification and abstinence, as his Saviour did; without which, the will and the appetites can never be reduced to order. There is something remarkable in the words, where Christ gives instruction how to cast out devils: *this kind*, saith he, *goeth not out, but by prayer and fasting.* The rule extends to every thing of that *kind*, whether evil spirits, or evil passions, which possess men to their destruction: all are to be cast out by prayer and fasting, and not without it. All men, by nature, are possessed with evil passions, which agitate and torment them; driving them to extravagance, outrage, despair, madness, and even death itself. All that an evil spirit could do, a man's own unmortified passions will do, to destroy him. And how are these

these enemies to be cast out? Will reason conquer them? No: let the body be indulged, and reason will soon be blinded and baffled. Even religion itself, with all its motives, will not avail, without positive mortification. So salutary is the habit of self-denial, and so necessary to man in his present situation, that he should deny himself even in the smallest things, that the habit may extend to things of greater consequence. And there is a refined pleasure in this conquest of the mind over the body, which the voluptuary neither knows, nor understands; and which, indeed, very few, in this age of professed self-indulgence, can relish or receive. I may add too, that the Christian religion, while it seems, in this doctrine, only to keep us down and punish us for our sins, does really admonish us for our safety, and consult our present happiness. For this practice of self-denial is conducive to health, peace and godliness; the only true riches on this side the grave. So that, upon the terms of Christianity, we gain more than we lose even in this world.

In his worldly estate, the follower of Christ must deny himself in what relates to his outward appearance and conversation with the world. It is our great misfortune, early in life, when

when we have little or no judgment, to be cheated with false ideas of pleasure and greatness, and a fanciful notion of our own importance. To himself, every man, on some principle or other, is the first personage in the world; and it is the labour of some people's lives to keep up and secure this visionary idea of their own importance. They affect distinction and superiority; and there is nothing they are so much afraid of upon earth, as of losing it, or seeming to lose it, in the eyes of other people. To prevent which, they study all the little artifices of pride; and often flatter their own vanity, by meanly transgressing the rules of common sense, and exposing the littleness of their minds to contempt and ridicule. So long as this temper has possession, how is it possible to be a follower of that Master, who, though the richest upon earth, threw off all superiority, and made himself poor and of no reputation, for our sakes? The children of the world are eagerly running into higher company, to borrow some consequence, which does not belong to them; but he associated with fishermen, and preferred the company and conversation of an obscure, godly family in Bethany: he chose the little things of this world to confound the great, and foolish things to confound the wise. But alas!

alas! Look at those who are called by his name, and see what stirring there is for precedence! What mean, servile endeavours, to procure honour from men, even from people of no judgment; while they neglect the only true honour which cometh from God; who hath far other notions of greatness and importance than those which the fashion of this world hath introduced and established.

And now, having considered the doctrine of self-denial, so far as the time will permit, I have only farther to observe, that the follower of Christ must be ready to imitate his Master in *taking up the Cross:* and we may assure ourselves, that the divine providence, with a fatherly attention, never fails to correct those of whose reformation there is any hope. Some, indeed, are left to themselves little interrupted in the enjoyment of the world: *They come into no misfortune like other folk, neither are they plagued like other men.* God deliver us from being of that number! For such an exemption, while it seems to be a privilege, is the greatest curse under heaven. Let no good man ever wish to have his portion in this life on the terms of the rich man in the Gospel. Besides this, the best and the wisest have their sins and their follies, which nothing but their

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own sufferings can cure; and as the Cross of Christ was the remedy for the sins of the world, so every individual must take that Cross from the appointment of God, which is adapted to his own particular case. As the occasion may require, we are visited with bodily pain and sickness, loss of wealth or reputation, unmerited neglect and dishonour, inconstancy of friends, who often stand at a distance, and are least useful, when they are most wanted. And, when God pleases, even the refreshments and comforts of the divine presence are withdrawn: the saint complains, like his Saviour on the Cross, that his *God hath forsaken him.* Such things are necessary for a time, to make us sensible of our own weakness and misery; to punish our past unprofitableness under the means of grace; and to mortify those who have neglected to mortify themselves.

The Cross of Christ was fore-ordained of God, with infinite wisdom, as the proper instrument of his death: and with the like wisdom he appoints the Cross, by which every particular man is to suffer. The precept directs every one to take up *his* Cross; not the trouble of another man, but that, which is sent for his own trial, and adapted to his own case. The God, who made him,

him, knows his wants and his feelings; and applies the trial to the proper part.—Monastics may whip and scourge themselves, and wear horse-hair garments to afflict their skin: but these are crosses of their own making. The question is, whether a man will take in Faith and Patience, as absolutely necessary to his own good, *that* Cross, which God's wisdom hath ordained for him, and laid upon him. How common is it for people to complain, that they could have borne any thing else but that present evil under which they are suffering! God knew that, and therefore he sent it; to punish their sin; to teach them patience; and to make them fly to him for help and support under the pressing sense of their own weakness. Here our faith is to resign itself, and to say, with the afflicted king Hezekiah,—*O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit; so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live!*

SERMON

SERMON XV.

LEST, BEING LIFTED UP WITH PRIDE, HE FALL INTO THE CONDEMNATION OF THE DEVIL. 1 TIM. iii. 6.

CONVERTS of little experience in the Christian Faith were disposed to be vain, when they were exalted above their brethren: and as vanity never fails to weaken the judgment, and put men out of humour with truth, error in doctrine soon follows, when pride has got possession of the imagination. The Tempter defrauds men of truth, as the artful defraud the simple of their money, by flattering them, and suggesting great ideas of their talents and qualifications.

By the *condemnation of the devil*, in the words of the text, so far as men can *fall into* it in

this life, we must understand that kind of sin, for which the devil himself is under sentence of condemnation. In the prophecy of Isaiah, his crime is specified, as an aspiring to be equal with God. Amongst other presumptuous expressions to the same effect, he said in his heart, *I will be like the Most High.* He suggested the same presumptuous thought to our first parents, tempting them to expect, that they might *be like Gods, knowing good and evil.* The good of the understanding is truth; its evil is falsehood; and if so they were tempted to seek the knowledge of good and evil, that is, of truth and falsehood, independent of God; consequently, in opposition to him. The desire of that independence, by which the creature becomes a law to himself against the Creator, was the root of sin in Lucifer: he tried the same temptation upon man, and it succeeded. It hath prevailed ever since, and will prevail to the end of the world. What was the whole religion of paganism, but a system of faith and worship invented by those who did not *like to retain God in their knowledge?* They *became vain in their imaginations*, and *their foolish heart was darkened.* They became *fools*, by *professing themselves to be wise;* and knew nothing of divine things, by pretending

tending to have a source of knowledge within themselves. Whence came all the heresies that infested the Christian church? Not so much from any obscurity in the Gospel, as from the vain reasonings of those, who were too proud to receive it: *If any man* (says the Apostle) *teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing.* If we look to the present age, whence comes all the modern opposition against the doctrines of Christianity, but from human philosophy, judging of good and evil by its own light, and proposing new sources of information, with new principles, new duties, and new obligations?

From this view of the text, it offers a very important fact to our consideration; namely, that there is a peculiar sort of wickedness, in which man may be a partaker with the devil. And if so, it is of infinite consequence that we should define it clearly, and explain it in such a manner as to guard our hearers against it: especially, as there is a dangerous mistake gone abroad amongst us, and of which the enemies of our faith are always prepared to take advantage. It has been very falsely sup-

posed, that people may secure to themselves the favour of God, and be in a state of salvation, if they do but observe moral honesty in their words and actions. Some through art, and others through ignorance, flatter men in this error; assuring them, that if they do but lead good lives, all articles of faith are no more than matters of opinion, and they need not trouble themselves about their creed. To correct this error, and demonstrate the malignity of it, is the principle object of this discourse. In order to which, it is obvious, as a first argument, that as a good life is the fruit of a good faith, it can no more grow from a wrong belief, than grapes can grow upon thistles. To every seed the Creator gives its own proper body; whatever we sow, the same we shall reap: and therefore it must be a strange, unnatural philosophy which expects to gather the fruit of Christian godliness from the seeds of infidelity.

Then again, it is manifest that *a good life* is an ambiguous expression, the vulgar use of which betrays great ignorance in those who confine it to the practice of social duties. For the Christian *life*, properly so called, comprehends two great branches of duty: the first, towards God, the second, towards our neighbour.

bour. God has an undoubted claim to the first place; our neighbour has the next. In regard to the latter, we have a plain rule to direct us: we do well, if we treat our neighbour as we wish to be treated by him. But then, what are we to do in respect to God? Here the rule fails us; for we cannot do to God as he doth to us: we have nothing to give him, but obedience and resignation to his will. It is he that must approve and reward us for our duty toward our neighbour; and it would be presumptuous to expect, that he will reward those, who put an immediate affront upon himself. If we look to the positive rule of our duty in the ten commandments, we find that the four first relate immediately to God himself; the others relate to our neighbour; and if we should observe the latter, to the neglect, and perhaps the contempt, of the former, and yet be thought to lead *good lives*; then we may deny the true God, worship idols, take God's name in vain, profane the sabbath, and commit many other dreadful crimes, and, after all, expect to be rewarded by God Almighty for leading a *good life*. But this is a supposition too shocking to be admitted by any but those, who are either desperately ignorant, or desperately wicked. If we fail in the principal part of our duty, and offend against God himself,

how can we expect his blesssing for what we do to any body else? Will some little acts of kindness to a fellow subject authorise us to commit an act of rebellion? Because we have given a dinner to a beggar, are we to be pardoned by the king for committing treason? The case is the same betwixt man and God. Will he permit us to neglect his worship, and put a slight upon his holy religion, because we are just good enough to escape the penal laws of our country, and do a little service to our neighbour? No man can believe this, till he is under some strong delusion.

The malignity of spiritual wickedness will be evident from the fall of our first parents, and from the moral character of the devil himself.

The first offence, which brought death into the world, was not an offence against society; for there was none. It was not a sin of one man against another, but only against a positive command of God. It was revealed, that the forbidden tree would have a fatal effect: this revelation was disputed; the truth of God was suspected; the lust of pride prevailed; and the sentence of death followed. If Adam, then, destroyed himself and the world, by sinning against the word of God, certainly any particular man may ruin himself after the same example;

example; even though he should give all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned for the benefit of his country.

All will be ready to grant, that no wickedness can be worse than the wickedness of the devil: but let them consider of what kind it is: he is no member of society; and being a *spirit*, he cannot commit the sins of *the body*: he is no *glutton*, no *drunkard*, no *miser*, no *adulterer*: his wickedness is entirely of a *spiritual nature*; in other words, it is not the wickedness of the *body*, but of the *spirit*. It consists in opposing the wisdom of God; perverting his word; accusing his justice; despising his mercy; suggesting evil thoughts to men; promoting heresies and schisms; in dividing the Christian church; and disturbing the kingdoms of the world; in a word, it is the peculiar business of the apostate spirit to defeat the gracious purposes of the divine spirit, by all the efforts of *falsehood*, *subtilty*, *pride*, *malice* and *contradiction*. The whole dispute between the Saviour and the destroyer is a war of spirits; and carnal men are miserably blind and ignorant when they make no account of it: especially when it is considered, that they themselves, as spirits, must be engaged on one side or the other.

The character most acceptable, because most useful to the grand deceiver, is that which comes nearest to his own: and for the forming of such a character, he employs the most refined of his temptations. The stupid sot, the profane swearer, the distempered sensualist, are mean examples of vice, the lowest of the devil's adherents; who are sometimes weary of the burden of their sins; and, being self-condemned, are driven by remorse to the amendment of their lives: but the speculative and philosophical sinner is a man of figure; whose pride will never admit of his reformation. The Scribes and Pharisees, conceited of their false logic, could always find some way to make the word of God of no effect; and so remained incorrigible in their errors: while the Publican was prevailed upon to renounce his extortion, and the Harlot to wash away her stains with the tears of repentance. The sinner who errs upon *principle*, and whose *mind* is in fault, not only *departs* from the will of God, but *opposes* it: *meaner* sinners *transgress* the law; but he *judges* it, and *sets himself above it.*

Such is the case of those, who, being wise in their own conceit, *are lifted up with pride, and fall into the condemnation of the devil.* He, whose

whose fall is to be great, *must* first be *lifted up;* he must be carried aloft, above other men, and then his fall will be his destruction. Thus did the tempter place our Saviour on high, upon a pinnacle of the temple, that he might claim an unwarrantable exemption from danger, and cast himself into the air, to meet that ruin which is the consequence of presumption.

But the spirit of man is not exposed to any danger, of which the scripture hath not given us fair warning. We are told, that we are under the peril of being overcome in our Christian warfare by *spiritual wickedness in high places;* (Eph. vi. 12.) that *the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God;* that our *imaginations* are to be *cast down,* our *thoughts* to be *brought into captivity;* as a proud enemy is led in triumph after the chariot of a conqueror: that Satan hath his *depths,* his *mysteries of iniquity,* as well as his more gross and shallow deceits; that he has agents to recommend his principles, and bring them into vogue; who are called *false apostles, deceitful workers,* manufacturers of fraud; transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ, and preaching down the Gospel, under the plausible pretence of *improving* it, and correcting *popular mistakes.*

These notices ought to alarm us; yet there

are few Christians who attend properly to them in this age; and therefore the work of every deceiver is easier now than it used to be. There are a set of fashionable phrases in religion, such as *speculative doctrines, liberty of opinion,* the *moral sense, right of private judgment,* with other novel and refined notions, by which the Christian virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity are overborne and superseded: and these have been repeated, till some have nearly lost the idea of *impiety,* and can see no wickedness in the nation, but such as is condemned in a common court of justice. It is true, the thief, the murderer, the adulterer, will all appear before the tribunal of Christ: but then, the heretic, the idolater, the blasphemer, the sabbath-breaker will be there too: and they will then discover, that what they call moral honesty, however excellent in its proper place, will be no excuse for despising articles of faith, and neglecting the ordinances of the gospel. Immorality is bad enough, and will undoubtedly exclude men from the kingdom of heaven: but *contumacy* is worse; because it strikes at the *authority* of God. Sensuality places man among the *beasts;* but infidelity gives him an alliance with *evil spirits.* The mind is better than the body in itself; and consequently,

sequently, according to an established proverb, worse in its corruption. No obedience can be acceptable to God, without that which is best of all, and first in order, the obedience of the understanding: no courage is so valuable, as that which *contends earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;* no temperance so excellent, as that which refrains from high thoughts and presumptuous imaginations. As the *thoughts* are the principles of action, and all vice and virtue begins in the *heart;* the scripture, for a natural reason, hath insisted so particularly on the obedience of the mind, and an humble reception of truth. A sound faith is the seed of a virtuous life; but if there is bitterness in the root, it will extend itself to the branches; and to a discerning palate every leaf will taste of it. All bad principles and irreligious opinions partake of the nature of the place from whence they come; they are not the seeds of grain or of fruit; but the seeds of *fire;* which from a small spark diffuse themselves abroad into a wide and destructive flame. How short is this proposition—*man may know good and evil independent of God!* It is a mere spark: yet this has filled the world with misery, ignorance, idolatry and atheism;

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it is the compendium of all heresy, and of all infidelity.

The nature of the subject requires us now to take a short review of the *artifices* which are employed to draw men into spiritual wickedness. The first and chief of these is to inflate the mind with a false opinion of its own natural powers. He, who undertakes to persuade us, that a man has a native *light* by which he can *know*, and a *power* by which he can *do*, the will of God, understands the consequences of his success: he knows, that if we follow him thus far, we shall be prepared to receive the rest of his opinions. Few have written against the Christian doctrines, at least in modern times, who have not first endeavoured to make the mind conceited of its own powers. He, that publishes to corrupted nature the pleasing doctrines of *natural liberty*, *independence*, and the *self-sufficiency* of the human *mind*, will never want an audience. Pride and indolence will always be glad to hear, that nothing is required of them, on questions of the highest importance in religion, but to look inwards, and consult their own opinions. The private judgment of an individual, rash and inexperienced as it may be, has been allowed to be

conclusive against the laws and regulations of society: whence vanity will readily infer, that a private person cannot do justice to his own wisdom, till he contradicts the judgment of the public, and strikes into some by-path of his own.

It has been asserted on the same ground, that no man can fall into condemnation for the errors of his faith; because sincerity in falsehood will be as acceptable to God as truth itself. But might we not as well say, that poison will answer all the purposes of wholesome food, provided it be eaten with a good appetite? Or that darkness may be substituted for light; and that men may direct their steps by one as well as by the other? If this principle is true, the priests of Baal may find a place in heaven, and Jesus Christ need not have come into the world.

Another way of recommending dangerous opinions is to magnify the authors and abettors of them, as persons of superior knowledge, and great worth, profound scholars, and acute reasoners. They are applauded also, yea, they applaud themselves, for the excellence of their temper, their universal candour and benevolence. While honest men are apt to betray the emotions of their indignation, the enemies

of

of their faith prevail upon themselves to practise a sort of political patience, which suppresses its own passions to take advantage of the passions of other men. This patience has nothing of religion in it; but may rather be considered as a kind of *anti-christian mortification;* a black virtue of a counterfeit angel of light. With this, however, they impose upon the unwary, who are not able to see through specious appearances. They affect to breathe nothing but peace and gentleness; they leave all others to think as they please, and desire nothing but that freedom of thought which they allow to other people. And who can deny to such accomplished gentlemen, the liberty of insulting all articles of faith, blaspheming the scriptures, defaming the Christian church, and corrupting the morals of Christian people, by undermining the very foundations of morality? especially when it is considered on the other hand, that piety and orthodoxy have nothing to uphold their credit in the world, but the arbitrary *authority*, and *persecuting* spirit of some men, working upon the *folly* and *credulity* of others: that all the refinements of learning are on one side; bigotry, superstition and ignorance on the other: that all the worst men are with the church, and all the best are against it.

A farther

A farther artifice of those who attempt to subvert the faith of their readers, is to pretend a sacred regard to *truth*, and a laudable desire to rescue the minds of their brethren from error and *imposition*. A man, who comes to make an impudent attack upon all the distinguishing articles of Christianity, introduces himself to us as a *sincere lover of the gospel*. He dare not leave his readers to find that out by the perusal of his work; but hopes they will be blind to the mischief of it, when they have conceived a fair opinion of the spirit and candour of the writer. This outward appearance of meekness and charity has always been assumed by those who have had ill designs against the flock of Christ. Disguise is necessary to the success of every impostor; insomuch that our blessed Saviour hath given it as the characteristic of a false prophet—*Beware*, said he, *of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's cloathing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves*. To secure themselves under their disguise, they caution us largely against censoriousness: they can bear every thing but censure and detection, which they call *uncharitableness*. We can never offend a thief so much as by following him with a candle, to shew people what he is about: but no good man will fear to give such

such offence: he will rather wish to be called censorious by those whom it is the duty of every true Christian to censure.

And now, if the Nature of Spiritual Wickedness is as I have represented it; (I hope without aggravation or partiality) our * office, as ministers of the gospel, calls upon us to provide against it, by alarming the careless; by rescuing, as far as we are able, those who have been ensnared by the sophistry of the adversary; and by securing those who are as yet uncorrupted. The oracles of God having been committed to us, our duty is to contend earnestly for the faith therein contained, that the people may not be defrauded of that light which God hath entrusted with us, for the guiding of their feet into the way of peace: in this great and necessary branch of our ministry, we are to avoid the two extremes of petulance and fearfulness: we must neither betray the cause, nor expose ourselves. When we see men obstinately shutting their eyes against the clear light of truth, and industriously leading others aside into darkness, our indignation will be raised: but we are so to be *angry* in this case as not to *sin:* and, on the other hand, when

* This Discourse was preached before the Clergy, at an Episcopal Visitation.

when we are moderating our zeal, we must take care not to carry our civility so far, as *to give place to the devil*, who deserves neither precedence nor courtesy at our hands. Some are so addicted to censure, that they see sin every where; others are so indifferent towards evil, that they see it no where. For them, evil men and evil spirits may go on as they please without any interruption.

Christians, who from ignorance or the prejudice of education have their doubts, and wish for information and satisfaction, are to be treated with civility and tenderness: but infidelity deserves no quarter. No praises will ever be due to the learning or abilities of those, who pervert their talents to the everlasting destruction of mankind.

When we endeavour to secure the mind from corruption, prudence will direct us to chuse the fittest season. First impressions of every kind are strongest; and therefore we must begin soon enough: we must sow the seeds of true religion, before the ill weeds of vanity and falsehood have got possession. The importance of early instruction, and the efficacy of catechetical forms, simply explained, is greater than any words can describe. Many, when they come to riper years, are carried about with every

every wind of doctrine, for want of timely instruction to keep them steady, and defend them from the deceits of enthusiasm, which have a dreadful effect on the interests of truth and piety. When a reprobate, who never had any regular foundation of Christian knowledge, changes all of a sudden into an Apostle (a phænomenon not altogether unknown in these days) he may boast that his *heart* is *turned*; but melancholy experience teaches us, that his *head* is too frequently turned along with it.

Lastly, it is to be remembered, that *above all things* we are to *put on Charity*; the best motive, and the best rule, to those who communicate or defend religious truth. This will regulate our zeal, and animate our prudence. The teacher, who is sincerely affected to the welfare of the Christian society, and touched with a sense of the inestimable value of souls, for whom Christ died, will be able to say with the beloved disciple, *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth.* That this end may effectually be promoted, we who teach or preach must, according to the doctrine of this discourse, have regard to the *mind* as well as to the *manners*, when we *form* the young or *reform* those of riper years, we must *begin* where we ought; and then we may expect

pect the blessing of heaven upon our instructions: when we have rectified men's principles, these principles will rectify their morals; and so shall the *God of peace sanctify them wholly; that their whole spirit, and soul and body, may be preserved blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

SERMON XVI.

AND UPON THE EARTH DISTRESS OF NATIONS, WITH PERPLEXITY; THE SEA AND THE WAVES ROARING; MEN'S HEARTS FAILING THEM FOR FEAR, AND FOR LOOKING AFTER THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE COMING UPON THE EARTH; FOR THE POWERS OF HEAVEN SHALL BE SHAKEN. LUKE xxi. 25, 26.

THE authority of God's laws, and of his ministers, to keep a fallen world in order, and secure to the good and virtuous the blessings of peace, is one of the greatest and best gifts of an over-ruling Providence. But we have reason to fear, that, as the world degenerates, and Christian piety declines, this blessing will not be preserved to us.

There

There will always be difficulty in the language of a prophecy which foretels an event not yet come to pass: therefore I would not venture to decide hastily in a matter of some obscurity. But it seems highly probable, from the language of our Saviour in the text, that the last age of the world shall be troubled, in an unusual manner, with popular tumults and commotions; arising partly as the natural and necessary fruits of wild and novel opinions, and partly from the just judgment of God upon those who have forsaken him.

Before we consider critically the words of the text, we may judge what will happen before the destruction of the world, from what did actually happen on certain other occasions, which have been marked as prophetical of that event. Before the coming of the Son of Man, it shall be as it was in the days before the flood —the earth was *filled with violence:* the word signifies *injustice, rapine,* and *robbery.* A state of *violence* is contrary to a state of *security;* for violence taketh away what government was ordained to secure. The heathen poet, describing the corrupt state of men before the flood, takes care not to omit this remarkable circumstance; telling us in his lan-

guage, that *the fury of discord then prevailed far and wide over the world* *.

The city of Sodom was in a state of anarchy when it was destroyed. All the people, old and young, assembled themselves without restraint from every quarter, to commit acts of wickedness and violence. They mocked at all authority in others, and were judges and executioners in their own right.—*This one fellow* (said they) *came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee than with them* †.

Before Jerusalem was destroyed, the fact is undoubted in history, that they were plagued with tumults and intestine commotions. The benefit of Government was lost amongst them; and troops of thieves and rioters, with self-commissioned leaders, plundered the city in a miserable manner, at their own discretion: till all were involved in one common catastrophe, when the place was stormed by the Romans.

From these cases the application is short and certain—As it was before the flood, as it was in Sodom, as it was in Jerusalem, so shall it be before the end of the world.

If

* Qua terra patet, fera regnat Erynnis—OVID. Met. i. 241.

† Gen. xix. 9.

If we go now to the text, we find, from the context, that our Lord is there describing those signs which shall precede, not the destruction of Jerusalem, but his own glorious advent to judge the world. The words of the passage cannot with any propriety be confined to the people of a city or a nation: being evidently spoken of the *nations* of the Gentiles, and of the whole *habitable world* *.

Yet this application brings us into a difficulty: for if the nations of the world are intended, the distress here mentioned seems too partial in its kind to reach them. None but people on the sea coast can be terrified with the raging of the sea: on which consideration, some commentators have supposed that the distress here spoken of was meant of Galilee and of the sea of Tiberias. But this is out of all reason, when compared with the context: we are therefore compelled to take a method of interpreting, which will bring the language up to the occasion. The words of a prophecy seem to speak of one thing, when another thing is intended; and that must be the case here. We know there is a sort of sea to be found in every inland country; the figurative sea of popular tumult and rebellious violence; much

* The words in the original are ἔθνων and οἰκουμένη.

more terrible and destructive to the peace of mankind, than all the storms which agitate the ocean.

The poet and the prophet describe things rather by their properties and effects, than by their vulgar names. Therefore the scripture compares the multitudes of the world to the waters of the sea; and the tumultuous rage of the people to the terrors of a storm. In the prophet Isaiah, the *abundance of the sea* * is put for the *forces of the Gentile* world, which should be turned to the church of Christ. In the same style, the harlot in the Revelation of St. John is said to *sit on many waters* †; as signifying the imperial power of heathenism which ruled over the Gentile world. And in a vision of Daniel, the four beasts, representing the four monarchies, rise out of a sea ‡, on which the four winds of heaven are all blowing at once; to signify, that they all arose from among the Heathens. Sometimes the text carries its own comment with it—Deliver me out of *great waters*, saith the Psalmist, from the hands of *strange children* §.

The waves of the sea, which lift up their heads, and assemble themselves farther than the eye

* Isa. lx. 5. † Rev. xvii. 1. ‡ Dan. vii. 2, 3.
§ Psalm cxliv. 7.

eye can distinguish them, exhibit a grand image of an innumerable multitude of people; whom they resemble farther by the noise they make: whence the voice of a great multitude is compared to the voice of many waters. But, above all, the waves of the sea are most like to a multitude when tumult and disorder prevail amongst them. As the waters are then driven together, each wave that follows endeavouring to mount over that which is before, and all dashing against the shore, from whence they are beaten back into the sea by their own violence; such are the people, when they are assembled together without order or government. The turbulent passions of men are never to be restrained from breaking out into noise and confusion, but by that power which over-rules the waters of the sea. God is therefore celebrated for the one under a figure of the other: thou *stillest the raging of the sea, and the noise of his waves and the madness of the people* *. When wild passions prevail amongst men, and there is no authority to keep them in awe, then society becomes what the sea is, when the winds are let loose upon it. There is then no more reason or judgment in the one than in the other: all is drowned with noise,

* Psalm lxv. 7.

and lost in the confusion of a storm. And herein we may view the difference between the power of government and the power of the people: for the power of government is ordained of God, and supported by his providence, to still that storm, and prevent that confusion, which the power of the people raises. The one is the only remedy against the other. The one is the gift of God to a nation that serveth him; the other is his curse upon the disobedient who are departed from him. And as there is not a sight more agreeable to the goodness of God, and the sense of all wise and good men, than a nation well appointed, under good laws, and strict authority, and unanimous in exerting their strength under their lawful leader, for their common defence against their enemies; so is there not a spectacle upon earth more desirable to the devil, than the dissolution of law and authority, and the breaking of national power by the mercenary jarrings and contentions of opposite interests and factions. The disobedience which arises from civil dissention is a mother sin, which brings forth a brood of vipers. Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. And that this shall prevail more and more, and rise to a tremendous height

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in the last times, so as to unsettle the world, and keep men in a miserable state of fear and suspense, is not only to be expected from what the scripture hath intimated, but from the state and temper of the world in this respect; which it behoves us impartially to consider.

When the reformation took place in Europe, many tares were sown among the good grain of that time; and one of the most pernicious was the claim of what is called *liberty;* a very good word, when taken in a good sense; but used of old as a *cloak of maliciousness,* and always most affected by those who were themselves the *servants of corruption.* The thing recommended at first was *religious liberty;* and the notion stole into the hearts of men, because it seemed to be a necessary remedy against the odious abuses and encroachments of the church of Rome. However, even in this sense, fearful were the effects of it, when fanatics took it up, and acted in virtue of it, as their own wild imaginations directed; which is abundantly confirmed by the history of the Anabaptists in Germany, and such like people. But of late years, men have taken another monstrous stride; and, from asserting *religious* liberty, against the Pope, have gone on to claim a *natural* liberty, against all kings and rulers;

rulers; with an equality of right in every man that is born to power and property. This they never could do as Christians, or men of common sense; so they have assumed the new name of *philosophers;* under which they set up a new religion of their own, with doctrines opposite in every article to those of Christianity.

The learning which is called classical is necessary to scholars, and hath many eminent uses; but the vain affectation of it is always dangerous. This it is which hath induced many amongst us to emulate the furious spirit which prevailed in heathen patriots; and to admire that most which was worst amongst them. They have little to say of the peace and splendour of the *Augustan* age, when men of greatest genius were loyalists; of the greatness of the empire under *Trajan;* its conversion under *Constantine;* its order and jurisprudence under *Justinian:* but their favourites are the savage *Brutus*, the sneaking *Valerius*, the perfidious assassins of the great *Cæsar;* and such like saints, of the true republican spirit.

The times of this world have shewn to us three sorts of people professing religion. 1. The believers and followers of God's revealed worship.

ship. 2. The practitioners of heathen idolatry. 3. The wise men of *Nature*, whose doctrines are many, and whose worship (if any) is from themselves. Of these three, the last are undoubtedly the worst. The Heathens, when they fell into idolatry, retained many traditionary notions, which were still near to the truth, and had some of its effects in civil society. But these last are utterly contrary to God and man; and their opinions will consequently produce more absurdity, and extravagance, and violence, than was ever seen in the world before. Their favourite doctrines seem to be these: that where government is concerned, man is born with a right to think and act as he pleases; that all authority in others is a dangerous imposition upon ourselves; and that the property of others belongs equally to us, if we can get it. To all which, there is not a thief in the precincts of the metropolis, who will not readily subscribe, and who, consequently, will not contribute his influence, and give his personal attendance, when a standard shall invite him, and give him an opportunity of putting his principles in practice.

We have all heard what terrible effects the false principles of the last century produced in this kingdom; and we have had a fearful speci-

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men of the like, of very late years; which, with the blessing of Providence, and an exertion of the still remaining power of government, lasted but a few days.

In the British colonies of America, subjects who were peaceable, happy, wealthy, and prosperous, changed on a sudden into discontented insurgents. A wild spirit of independence prevailed; and, by the just judgment of God upon a profligate mother, and untutored children, succeeded; for a fatal precedent and encouragement to other wicked, discontented people. Much sooner than we could have expected hath the contagion spread itself to a neighbouring country; and, what is very striking, and hath been generally noticed, the same person whom they employed against the peace of this government, is the leader in their own disturbances. Their situation, by all true accounts, hath been dreadful and lamentable; as that of every nation must be under the like circumstances. While the laws are in force, a man's house is his castle, and his life, and fortune, and character, are secured to him: but when a lawless multitude is afloat, the best members of society are at the mercy of the worst. Every man is a convict, when his enemy is his accuser, judge, and executioner. There

There are no rays of mercy from a throne to save the head of the unhappy victim from being made a spectacle upon a pole; no lawful force to protect his stores from being plundered, his lands laid waste, his buildings burned and demolished.

Now, when we hear these things, what are we to think of them? We have teachers at home, who are glad of what hath happened; who inform us, that these are the efforts of freedom; that murders and massacres are among the sacrifices proper to such an occasion; *i. e.* due to the idol of liberty, that Moloch which must be worshipped with human sacrifices; and that they hope to see the same incendiary spirit extend itself to other peaceable countries of Europe: in other words, they hope to see *distress of nations with perplexity*; encouraging the sea to rage, and the waves to roar and toss themselves, and exceed the just bounds which God hath appointed. If these evils should spread, and the like infatuation should prevail in other nations, the whole habitable world would be a theatre of desolation, a field of blood. The evils arising from such experiments are endless; the good to be expected from them is of a very equivocal nature; and the method of obtaining it is very

very unpromising. If the philosophical politician, from what we know of him already, were to model nations to his own wish, the world would be in a very vain, ignorant, corrupt, and, in many respects, a very miserable state. If all the jewels of imperial authority were thrown into the fire, nothing better than a calf would come out of it.

Popular tumult and division were the curse of the heathen world for many ages, when false liberty was become the object. The apostle St. Paul describes them *full of envy, murder, and debate* *: which was certainly the case with the republics of *Rome* and *Athens*. They were troubled with that proud, restless jealousy of power, which threw them into perpetual convulsions. To the abolition of kingly government they gave the specious name of *liberty*, and pronounced a state *free*, if it had no king: not considering that the many may be tyrants as well as a single person, and that nothing can make a people free but the exercise of such a power as restrains them from making *a prey of one another*. When the Romans put down their kings, they laid the foundation of a much greater and more extensive tyranny: and the celebrated orator of Rome, a professed admirer

* Rom. i. 29.

admirer of republican government, lived to see such effects of it, as made him confess, in plain terms, that no king ever grasped at such tyrannical power as was affected by the popular magistrates of Rome *. The history of that people, for five hundred years, presents us with a scene of faction and disorder, proceeding from bad to worse, and degenerating into proscription, murder, and massacre; which he, who sees and considers, will never believe that the republican form was given to any people for a *blessing*. And the delusion of mind they were all under, at the same time, is worth your observing. It is found, by experience, that the cry of liberty arises commonly from the thirst of power; and that the same spirit, which is outwardly patriotical, is inwardly tyrannical. So it happened with these. For while they dreaded power in their own magistrates, and were always providing against it, they held it by a supposed charter from heaven,

* Verbum mihi deest, Quirites, cum ego hanc potestatem *regiam* appello: sed profectò major est quædam. Cic. de Lege Agraria, Orat. II. § 14.—Renovabo illud quod initio dixi—*regnum* comparari, libertatem vestram funditus tolli. § 10.—They were using their interest for the establishment of a law, which would have put the lives and fortunes of the citizens, and the sale of the public lands, into their own absolute power for five years.

heaven, that all other nations were made to be their slaves; and, instead of paying taxes from their own property, they were eating up the substance of other people, and filling their treasury with the money drained from conquered provinces, whom they kept tributary to themselves; or with the spoil and plunder seized from them in war. It was the declared object of these lovers of freedom, to make themselves the arbiters and proprietors of other men's liberties, and bring them under absolute subjection. It is boasted of by one of their own historians, with what great labour, and how many bloody battles, they had brought *free nations to the Roman yoke, and taught them to be slaves* *. These are his very words.

The expedient to which the lower order had recourse for securing themselves from the oppression of the nobility, raised up that new set of tyrants, who were for ever troubling the state with some new sedition †, and for whom, according

* Liberas gentes, ideo impatientes *jugi*, multo labore, nec incruentis certaminibus, *servire docuerunt*. Flor. Hist. lib. ii. cap. 17.

† Seditionum omnium causas tribunitia potestas excitavit, quæ specie quidem plebis tuendæ, cujus in auxilium comparata est, re autem *dominationem* sibi acquirent. Ib. lib. iii. c. 13.

according to the testimony of Cicero himself, the power of royalty was not great enough.

The providence of God used this hardy, warlike people as a scourge to other nations; and so they appear under a great and honourable character: but their own false principles produced such domestic misery, as did justice in every age upon their own pride and ambition. And thus, high as they were, they found a way of bringing themselves down to a level with the nations whom they despised as barbarians.

The case of this people is very remarkable, and, if considered, may give us some light into the ways of Providence. For when God was about to reform the world by the introduction of the Gospel, he restored imperial government at Rome, where it seemed impossible for it to take effect against the violent prejudices of the people. He opened their eyes to see the miserable fluctuations in their former government, and the very people, who had abhorred the idea of royalty, became so fond of it, that no Christian flatterers ever came up to them. In consequence of this wonderful work of Providence, the Gospel knows of no such government as a commonwealth. In the New Testament, *kings as supreme*, and those who were *sent by*

kings, as the Roman governors of the time then were, are pointed out as the proper objects of civil obedience. But as the world draws toward its end, and God is about to destroy it, He, who turned commonwealths into kingdoms, may turn kingdoms into commonwealths; and that time may now be approaching.

I may be thought to overstrain the sense; but it is more agreeable to the context to suppose, that the *powers* of *heaven* which shall be *shaken*, signify the powers of government which shall be unsettled and removed from their old foundations. The powers in the natural heaven, the sun and the moon, which rule over the day and the night, are emblematical of empire and government upon earth *. And besides this, the Scripture admits of no *power* amongst men, but what is *given them from above:* and in that sense also is the *power*

* Our late Bishop *Newton*, who was deeply versed in the language of prophecy, having quoted Isaiah, xiii. 9, 10, and Ezech. xxxii. 7, 8, and Joel, ii. 30, 31, in order to illustrate this very passage concerning the *shaking of the powers of heaven*, observes very justly, "In the prophetic language *great commotions and revolutions* upon earth are often represented by commotions and changes in the heavens." *Dissert. on the Proph.* Vol. II. p. 305.

power of heaven. This power has long been disregarded by some, while its existence is denied by others; and the object with all libertines is, to shake it, and cast it down, and shut it out of the world, and leave nothing but the power of the people; which, if it be taken for the *power of authority*, is a thing consistent neither with religion nor common sense.

We are fallen into times, when the doctrine of the divine authority of government is received by the multitude with such pride, and impatience, and mockery, that it is plain their reason is disordered upon the subject. When their opinions prevail, and they are permitted to assume to themselves that power which belongeth only to God, no greater calamity can happen to any nation. This is the case at present with the people of a neighbouring country: and, surely, it is our duty to reflect upon that, as upon all the other ways of divine Providence. Some facts have been brought to to pass, of late years, so extraordinary in themselves, and of such magnitude, that we may justly be alarmed. For the same principles which have disturbed others, and brought their present calamities upon them, are at work daily amongst ourselves. It is to be feared they

were borrowed from us*; and if God, for the punishment of our manifold sins and corruptions, should suffer them to take effect here, they will put arms into the hands of all the disorderly people in the kingdom, and overturn our constitution in church and state; with such circumstances of *distress*, and *perplexity*, and terror, as can be conceived only by those who have been witnesses to such disorders.

From the prospect of things presented to us in the text, I beg leave humbly to suggest, in few words, how Christians ought to conduct themselves under such circumstances.

We,

* In the last century great danger arose to society from enthusiastic notions in religion. Of later years, a grand levelling hath been adopted, which tends to confound all right and property amongst mankind, and strikes at the authority of God himself in church and state. One of the first books, in which this was openly done, was called the *Rights of the Christian Church*. It undertook to prove that the Church is the creature of the state, and the state the creature of the people, and that God himself, as the governor of Israel, became such in virtue of a contract between himself and the people at Horeb. This precious piece was turned into French by *Le Clerc*, and put into his *Bibliotheque Choisie*, which went over Europe, and probably sowed some of those thistles, which are now springing up, and threaten to overspread the face of the earth.

We, who teach, though in times that are bad, and daily altering for the worse, should never be ashamed of our true principles, nor weary of warning the people against the delusion of such as are false. If we should be opposed by those who treat us with scorn and contempt, for speaking as our duty requires, we should neither wonder, nor be troubled at it, but consider their insolence as a part of their distemper. Their opinion is of no more weight when they extol *what they call liberty*, than when they deny Christianity; and we commonly find a strong propensity to do both, in the same person. Some assert their freedom against God's institution of marriage; some against his institution of government: all promise themselves happiness in so doing; but all find servitude and corruption. This we should endeavour to make the people aware of, and admonish them still to *pray for kings and for all that are in authority*, as Christians did of old, and as the Church of England directs us to do now; that we may lead a quiet and a peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

We are farther to insist, that God is fearful and just in his judgments; that he abases those who exalt themselves; that he violently takes away honours and riches, when they are

abused to the purposes of luxury and impiety; that he lets the wild boar of the wood into the vineyard of his church, to trample it down and lay it waste, when its fruits are become sour, and unprofitable; that men should therefore so live as to secure to themselves the protection of God, and be able to look up to him with confidence in the day of *distress* and *perplexity*. Whatever changes may take place here below, God is still the same. The Psalmist describes him as seated securely on high, upon the throne of his kingdom; while the people, like the restless waves of the sea, are vainly raging below: *Ever since the world began hath thy seat been prepared—The waves of the sea are mighty, and rage horribly; but yet the Lord, who dwelleth on high, is mightier.* Psalm xciii. *Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved, and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea: though the waters thereof rage and swell, and the mountains shake at the tempest of the same.* This world must come to its end: we should therefore not be dismayed at the *signs*, which make it probable that its end may be drawing near. For why? The same sea, which destroyed the wicked Egyptians, gave deliverance to the chosen people of God. We should have no desire to

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put off the end of this world; but should rather pray, as we are taught to do in the most solemn of our offices, that God would *shortly accomplish the number of his elect, and hasten his kingdom;* that saints and martyrs, and all who have, and do suffer for the cause of God and the name of Jesus Christ, may lift up their heads, and see their Deliverer seated upon the clouds of heaven.

Till this shall be brought to pass, let us not set our affections on the pleasures of this unsteady world, so apt to disturb and alarm us with the misery of present, and the terror of future, evils. Woe be unto those, who have not God for their confidence in the day of visitation!—*Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man*—To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all power and dominion, in heaven and earth, both now and for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON XVII.

YE OUGHT TO SUPPORT THE WEAK, AND TO REMEMBER THE WORDS OF THE LORD JESUS, HOW HE SAID, IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE. ACTS XX. 35.

CHILDREN of this world, and *children of light,* are phrases of the Scripture, by which two opposite parties of men are distinguished: and it is a considerable step toward the christian life, to understand rightly their different principles and rules of action. A general character of each, so far as our present subject is concerned with them, may be given in few words. The *children of this world* are they, who study how to turn men's labours and passions and prejudices

prejudices to their own advantage; and their chief wisdom consists in making other men useful to themselves. The *children of light*, having higher objects in view, think it their wisdom as well as their happiness to make themselves useful to all mankind. It never could be expected that the former would pay much regard to the memorable saying in the text; therefore it is addressed to the latter; to Christians, who are glad to hear, and ready to follow, *the words of the Lord Jesus*. He, whose first object it is, to get as much as he can, by any means whatsoever, will find little inclination to give; especially on a religious motive; for the sake of a prospect which he could never see: but he, whose faith has taught him that he may be a gainer by his losses, will readily admit that he may be blessed for his gifts. From this great difference in their opinions, the man of the world despises the Christian; while the Christian pities the man of the world, and understands him much better than he understands himself.

Our blessed Saviour was the great example of his own sublime doctrine. He came into the world, not to receive, but to give. He refused its wealth, its honour, and its power: he gave bread to the hungry, comfort to the

afflicted, health to the sick, life to the dead: he gave himself for our redemption, and ascended up on high, that he might send down his gifts upon earth: he is now daily giving to those that ask, and has promised to assist his church with his gifts to the end of the world.

We have another eminent example of this doctrine in the person of St. Paul: "I have coveted (said he) no man's silver, or gold, or apparel; yea, you yourselves know, that these hands have ministred unto my necessities, and to them that were with me."

This duty of *ministring* to the *necessities* of *them that are with us*, our fellow-christians, friends, relations, and associates in the work of the Gospel, is the subject we have before us on the present occasion: you will therefore permit me to recommend it to your attention from the words of the text; which teach us,

First, that we *ought to support the weak.*

Secondly, that we are encouraged so to do, from the consideration, that *it is more blessed to give than to receive.*

That the strong ought to support the weak, is in a manner self-evident from the state of mankind; who being by nature endued with unequal powers, are formed into societies for their mutual assistance and protection, as the superior

superior and the subordinate members are set together in the same body. And if God has made all men for one another, as the constitution of things plainly indicates, the world, wicked as it is, can present us with no vice more unnatural and detestable than selfishness. For what could any one amongst us have done, unless the Creator in his mercy had provided those, whose duty and pleasure it was to support us when we had no help in ourselves? We bring into life no faculty but that of signifying our wants; and the cries of an infant find a ready way to the heart of a parent. In our first years, the attendance of the mother is necessary; without which the tender plant must fade and perish: and the father is called upon for support and education till the years of manhood. Every child comes forward in the world under an obligation to repay the debt of gratitude upon other objects with some of that same kindness, without which he himself must have been lost: and the sordid wretch, who can gratify and indulge himself without any sense of this obligation, should have been left upon a common, there to cry to the winds and the elements, which have no sense of human weakness. "Be kind to strangers," said the Law,

Law, "for *ye were once strangers in Egypt* *;" so may the moralist say, with parity of reason, *support the weak*, for ye were once weak as they are.

In virtue of this argument, the first debt is due to parents and all relations; but it extends to all mankind. Want and weakness, wherever they are found, carry their own recommendation to a benevolent mind. And we must not be too strict in enquiring after the causes of them. They may be the effects of vice and folly; yet sinners have a claim upon sinners; and if they stand in need of admonition, no man has so just a title to reprove and amend the follies of another, as he that relieves his wants. If God were extreme to examine into the claims of all those who apply to his mercy, how few would be fit to say their prayers! The most proper objects for the exercise of true benevolence are those who have it not in their power to make any return: perhaps they will never have it in their inclination; yet the Father of mercy, who is to be our pattern, extends his goodness to the *unthankful and to the evil, and sends his rain upon the just and upon the unjust.*

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* Deut. x. 19.

When we consider ourselves as Christians, every page of the New Testament will suggest some additional obligation to the practice of this duty. There we are instructed, that *no man liveth to himself*; that neither our effects nor our persons are at our own disposal; that we have nothing but what we receive; that we are all related in Christ Jesus, as members of the same mystical body, animated by the same Spirit, and called to the same faith and hope: that we have the same friends and the same enemies. On which considerations, the Christian Society, in the purest ages of the Church, subsisted as one family upon a common stock. No man said *that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but they, who had houses or lands, sold them,* and a fund was raised, out of which *distribution was made unto every man according as he had need**. This charitable mode of allotting to him that lacked the superfluities of him that abounded, was suggested to the people of God by the distribution of the manna in the wilderness: of which he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; every man had a supply according to his wants. We are not to suppose that Christians are to surrender

* Acts iv. 32, &c.

surrender their whole substance now as at first: our present circumstances seem to render that impracticable: but this we are never to forget, that God permits, we may say, ordains, inequality of possession, that the piety of his servants may correct it by an equality of distribution. And the opportunity will never be wanting. Poverty shall never cease; distress shall never have an end; and tears shall flow for the merciful to wipe them away, till God shall take that office upon himself: and when there shall be no more sin, there will be no more sorrow.

Hence we infer, that the abundance of one man above another is no effect of chance, nor of any partial intention in Divine Providence; it must be so; and he who wishes to see men in a state of equality, wishes to see them more like the beasts, who are incapable of considering each other's wants, and are rather taught by their instinct to chace away every poor stranger as an intruder: but by man, superior property is held in trust; whence every rich man will have an account to render as an overseer of the poor upon his own stock; and if any should be found to have perished for want of the relief which he might and ought to have bestowed, but did not, justice will one day

day have a claim upon him, which no money can satisfy; and many a poor man will have reason to thank God, he was not that rich man.

If possession were absolute, it would follow, that God is a respecter of persons: and they, who think it or wish it so, are under a very unhappy mistake. Their idea of enjoyment is false and abject; it is contradictory to the noblest affections of the soul, and the truest notions of greatness, as well as to that memorable sentence of our Lord, *It is more blessed to give than to receive.* A generous mind never enjoys its possessions so much as when others are made partakers of them. In this, man is enabled most nearly to resemble God; who gives all things to all, but can receive nothing from any. Yet in one case, when we give to the poor for his sake, he is pleased to take it to himself: *inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my poor brethren,* saith our blessed Saviour, *ye did it unto me.* If there is a way of *lending unto the Lord,* as the Scripture hath expressed it *, he above all men must be blessed, to whom the proprietor of heaven and earth is a debtor. Hence it appears, that what is given is not lost, as an usurer would reckon; it is more properly our own than it was before.

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* Prov. xix. 17.

It is as seed sown in the earth, which returns to the sower with an abundant increase. What is *received* is as the corn we bestow upon ourselves; it is eaten, and perishes. What is *given*, is as corn cast into the earth, which cometh to us again at the harvest.

There is no better encouragement to an active and busy life, than this one consideration, that it puts us into a capacity of having more to spare for the wants of others. Industry, on this principle, is the first social duty, because it leads to the greatest, which is charity. *Ye yourselves know*, said the great Apostle, *that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them which were with me.* Blessed is he whose labours have furnished him with something to give! But what must he do who is idle? Where is his blessing? He can give nothing, for he has nothing: he must live upon other men's labours; which is a mean and servile condition. There ought therefore to be a curse upon idleness: he, who does no good, should receive none. And if we look to the dispositions of men, we shall generally find, that the slothful are never easy in any situation, but always complaining and discontented; neglecting their own affairs, and troubling themselves to no purpose with fretful remarks upon

upon the concerns of other people; while the busy are vigorous and chearful, neither provoked with the follies of private life, nor foreboding visionary evils from the administration of the state. Upon the whole, there is not a more contemptible being in the creation than an idle man: which leads us to make a comparison between the honour of giving, and that of receiving. The givers are the rich, the honourable, the merciful, the devout, and the industrious: the receivers are the poor, the sick, and the needy; to whom we may add, the covetous, the idle, and the useless: Therefore, if the givers are better than the receivers, it is on this account also, *more blessed to give than to receive.*

Here we are to lament, that the possession of wealth, while it confers the ability of doing good, too often takes away the inclination. In some it foments an effeminate principle of self-indulgence; in others a sort of churlish pride, which hardens the mind, and shuts up the heart instead of opening the hand. Married persons, who have no children, and with whom wealth is more easily accumulated, are frequently observed to be more attentive to their œconomy than those who have large families;

lies; and age is more avaricious than youth, because it is generally richer.

If all men were rational, he that becomes rich would congratulate himself in some such words as these: "Now I am happy, in that I have a farther opportunity of doing good unto others; for this is the honour and the pleasure of man." He that becomes old as well as rich, would be ready to say within himself, "Man wants but little, and I shall want that little but for a short time: while I have the opportunity which I am shortly to lose, let me *do good unto all men, especially unto them that are of the houshold of faith.*" Thus would men reason if they reasoned right: and thus they will reason, when true religion hath shewed them the brevity and vanity of life, the claims of their fellow creatures and fellow Christians, the uncertainty of possession, the certainty of retribution in a better state, where it shall at last be *blessed to receive.* Nothing shall be given, nothing will be wanted: all shall receive of the fulness of God: the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, shall be replenished together: they who have been able to do good shall be happy to find that its reward is eternal; and they who have suffered want and weakness shall triumph that the evil days are to return no more.

I am

I am now to intreat your attention, while I apply some of the past doctrine to the occasion of our present meeting, for the support of the widows and orphans of deceased clergymen; a noble and pious institution, which does honour to those who promote it, whether of the clergy or laity, and will, we trust, give them a title to the blessedness in the text.

Some say the clergy think of nothing but *receiving*, and are more attentive to their worldly profits than all other men. But from whom do such censures come? Generally, either from those who have a sordid interest in defrauding them of their dues; or from those who wish there were no clergy, because they wish there were no religion. Uncharitable and ill-disposed minds endeavour to cover their own atheistical disaffection to the service of God with the faults and weaknesses of the clergy, whether real or imaginary. But if such an accusation is brought against the clergy in general, it is not true. The institution and support of charitable societies by the clergy themselves in almost every diocese of this province, for the benefit of their poorer brethren and their posterity, is a sign that they have views beyond their own present advantage. Consider them at large as an order of men, or profession, and it will be found that they are as

little guilty of coveting other men's goods, and making a property of their neighbours, as any order of men whatsoever. For it may justly be said of them, that they expect nothing but what is their own. The tithes or tenths allotted for their support, were freely granted on a religious principle by the crown, with the consent of the Lords and Commons of the realm, in the Saxon times, when the king was proprietor of all the lands in the kingdom; and the charter is still extant in our ancient historians *. They were not purchased by any owner, nor are they paid for by any occupier of the land; if they were, the rents would be at least one seventh part higher than they now are. The tenant only surrenders what the land has been charged with for nine hundred and twenty-seven years; and so little can be laid to the account of the clergy for exacting it with rigour, that I believe there are few amongst them, who will not readily acquiesce in the terms made for themselves by the neighbouring lay-impropriators. It is hard upon them, that in some instances, where the tenths have been surrendered peaceably to laymen, confederacies have been formed and illegal assemblies convened, to prevent the taking of the tenths in kind by clergymen.

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* See *Monast. Angl.* Vol. I. p. 100, and *Collier's* Eccle. Hist, Vol. I p. 156, &c.

As this evil arises only from the corruption of the times, the reformation of the times would be the natural and the best remedy. To change the tenure of clergymen's property, may be found the worst remedy of all; for their present tenure as owners of tithes is wiser and safer, more agreeable to the laws of God, to the practice of all ages and all religions, Patriarchal, Jewish, Heathen and Christian; and consequently better with all its inconveniences than it could possibly be in any other form, or on any other authority than that of their ancient charter: and for those inconveniences, time may bring forth some remedy which we cannot now foresee.

I am very sensible, the mode of receiving tenths was once more agreeable than at present. There was a time when the people *dedicated their tithes with gladness* *, and made their offerings on a principle of devotion; as knowing that God is not an indifferent spectator of what passes in his church; that he could either send a blessing upon their fruits, according to his promise †, or punish their fraud and sacrilege with a temporal curse upon their affairs. This was once the persuasion of the people of England; and then there was a

* Ecclus xxxv. 9. † See Mal. iii. 10.

more general good understanding and mutual affection between the minister and his congregation. Now it is too much the fashion to leave Providence out of the question; and to consider tithes and offerings, merely as dues settled by law, which a man may lessen as much as he can, and oppress his minister with as low and unjust an agreement as possible: by the prevalence of which cruel policy, many of the clergy are struggling to maintain themselves and their families on less than two thirds of their just profits: and this under the increasing burthen of rates and taxes. If a clergyman thus oppressed endeavours to do himself justice, a confederacy is formed to distress him: the hearts of his people are alienated; separate interests take place, where there ought to be but one; his labours are no longer successful; his time and thoughts, which should be dedicated to the good of his flock, are unhappily taken up in maintaining a dispute against them: his peace of mind is destroyed, and his life in some cases rendered so uncomfortable, that many a tender hearted man must have sunk under the trial with vexation and disappointment.

The clergy may have their faults, their errors, and their corruptions, like other classes of men; (God

(God grant we may lament and reform them!) but here the fault is not in them; because no clergyman can take more than his right: the fault is in those who would compel him to take less. When the law has been applied to by clergymen for the recovery of their dues, this has rarely happened but when it was absolutely necessary; and it has been reported, that out of seven hundred suits upon record, six hundred of them have been carried by the clergy: which fact is sufficient to shew, that, whatever may be said against individuals, clergymen in general have been neither covetous nor litigious.

There is a sort of oppression long established, under which the clergy have suffered. The reformation, which took from Papists what the Pope had unjustly alienated from parochial rectors, restored little of it to the reformed ministers. It was mostly granted out to those of the laity who were early enough in their applications, and they hold it to this day. Many clergymen have a very scanty maintenance, and in some cases, it is to be feared, a very mean dependence upon lay patrons, who are rectors of parishes, and receive the tithes once due to the ministers. They were taken from those who were said to do little; but the

matter surely was not mended, when they were given to those who did nothing.

To this grand abuse many others may be added, when we are recounting the hardships of the clergy; such as the establishment of inadequate compensations, the payment of antiquated sums in their nominal value, and such like. In short, too many advantages, which times and occasions would encourage the powerful and the avaricious to take against the clergy, have been taken against them; and if not with the malice of *Julian*, who plundered Christians that they might pursue their road to heaven with fewer incumbrances, yet certainly with too great an attention to worldly interest, and too little attention to the honour of God, the success of his gospel and the just rights of his church; which depended upon God before it depended upon men; and cannot be rendered independent of him by all the power and policy of the world.

It is a farther misfortune upon the families of clergymen, that the profits of their office do not bear a proportion like those of other men to the labours of it. The physician who visits more patients raises a fortune sooner than he who visits fewer: the pleader at the bar who does most business comes soonest to wealth

and

and honour. This is not the case with the pleader in the pulpit: his attention to the welfare of men's souls adds nothing to the established profits of his ministry: and in many large and populous parishes, where the minister has most duty, there is nothing but a residuary vicarial revenue to support it; and that perhaps to be collected by small sums, with trouble and uncertainty: so that the advantage is least where the labour is greatest. And after the discouragements of his life, the clergyman at his death leaves no such profession as can be carried on by a surviving widow for the maintenance of the family; who are left in poverty, with a quick and afflicting sense of their misfortunes, from the advantage (or rather disadvantage) of superior sentiments and a refined education.

All these considerations recommend to your encouragement the charity* of this day; which,

* To give this charity a better effect, it was found expedient, that a particular attention should be had to the education of the poor orphans of clergymen, till they are of age to be placed out in the world. A charitable society was accordingly formed for this good purpose in the year 1749, the *Constitutions* of which (being annually printed and distributed) do so fully explain the design, and prove the advantages, of this *new Charity*, that I must beg leave to recommend the little pamphlet which contains

which, we trust, hath the good wishes, and will continue to receive the assistance of those who are here present.

But since no human institution can prosper without the Divine blessing; we who are of the clergy must secure that blessing, and engage the protection of heaven, by approving ourselves as faithful ministers of Jesus Christ; that through our labours, our families and posterity may have a claim of relationship and dependence on the Divine Providence to the end of the world.

My station in the church gives me no right to use a style of authority; and if it did, I hope I should be tender in my reflections, through a consciousness of my own defects. But I must mention one great danger to which even serious men are now exposed in the discharge of their ministry. It arises from the scandal which has been brought upon our religion by hypocrisy in some, and enthusiasm in others. This makes us shy of appearing active in our duty, through a childish fear, lest they who never will do right should think we are doing wrong. The people who call themselves

contains them to the consideration of those who are charitably disposed; under a persuasion, that this state of the case will speak for itself, and induce them to encourage so excellent an institution.

selves *the world* can forgive a man any thing sooner than the appearance of much religion: and in an age when counterfeits are abroad, they censure with a shew of prudence and authority: their opinion becomes popular; and falsehood, when popular, never fails to domineer; it produces insolence on one side, and servility on the other. In every community, the vicious and the indolent will, if they can, make themselves a rule to all the rest; no coin must be current without their image and superscription. The man who gives praise to that truth or that virtue which reflects dishonour upon himself, must be blessed with a degree of liberality rarely to be met with. Sobriety must therefore never expect the good word of drunkenness; profligacy will always contemn prudence; profaneness will mock at piety; and they who have much religion must now meet the danger of being cast out as counterfeits by those who have little. If they are in the church, and shew any extraordinary attention to the work of the ministry, they will incur the suspicion of being under some mistake: some root of error will be supposed to animate them; as if false doctrine alone could inspire a zeal for the glory of God. But has the plan of Redemption no value; has the goodness

goodness of God no influence; has the eloquence of Revelation no power, but with indiscreet minds and disordered imaginations? Heaven forbid that we should harbour so injurious a sentiment, which reflects dishonour upon God and man! If hypocritical sanctity in some, and enthusiastic doctrine in others, have brought Christian zeal into disrepute, this will indeed be a snare to those who lay too great a stress upon the approbation of the world. But we may steer through all these difficulties, by attending to the example of the church here, and committing ourselves to the judgment of God hereafter. Thus we shall be secured from the wildness of imagination, and from that dishonourable fear, which would hinder us from being of any use as soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Every clergyman has his way marked out for him in the Articles and Homilies of the CHURCH OF ENGLAND; a church which has hitherto been a faithful witness to all necessary truth; grounding her belief on the scripture and the practice of the purest ages. Her sober doctrines will secure us from the flights of fancy, and the vanity of innovation. Thus, however active and busy, we shall still be true and orderly sons of the church; and if we do not

not give satisfaction under that character, no blame will lie upon our consciences; let those look to it who do not accept of us.

To secure ourselves against the prevailing influence of fashion, so formidable to the children of this world, we must consider ourselves as stewards of God, to whom alone we shall be accountable at last. If he shall approve of us, it will not be worth our while to enquire who hath condemned us. The breath of censure, and the blast of fame, are temporary and transient; the distinctions which now make so much noise, the parties which disturb the world, and divide the hearts of men, shall soon be at an end. Infidelity and indevotion shall meet the infamy they deserve, and truth shall once more be held in honour. Which God of his infinite mercy grant in his good time, for the merits of Jesus Christ; *to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, three persons and one eternal God, be ascribed, as is ever due, all honour, glory, praise, might, majesty and dominion, both now and for evermore.* Amen.

THE END OF THE FIFTH VOLUME.

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